I am a heritage because I bring you years of thought and the lore of time — I impart yet I can not speak — I have traveled among the peoples of the earth — I am a rover — Oft-times I stray from the fireside of the one who loves and cherishes me - who misses me when I am gone — Should you find me vagrant please send me home - among my brothers - on the book shelves of .....

ALFRED SANTELL

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THE WORKS OF
BENJAMIN DISRAELI
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

EMBRACING
NOVELS, ROMANCES, PLAYS, POEMS,
BIOGRAPHY, SHORT STORIES
AND GREAT SPEECHES
WITH
A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION BY
EDMUND GOSSE, LL.D.,
LIBRARIAN TO THE
HOUSE OF LORDS.
AND
A BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE BY
ROBERT ARNOT, M.A.

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SYBIL

OR

THE TWO NATIONS

BY

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY FRANCIS VAUX WILSON

'You are beneath abuse, as you are beneath every sentiment but one, which I entirely feel.'

(See page 219.)

M. WALTER DUNNE
NEW YORK AND LONDON

SYBIL

OR

THE TWO NATIONS

BY

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

VOLUME I.

M. WALTER DUNNE

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I WOULD INSCRIBE THIS WORK TO ONE WHOSE NOBLE
SPIRIT AND GENTLE NATURE EVER PROMPT HER
TO SYMPATHISE WITH THE SUFFERING; TO
ONE WHOSE SWEET VOICE HAS
OFTEN ENCOURAGED, AND WHOSE TASTE AND JUDG-
MENT HAVE EVER GUIDED, ITS PAGES:
THE
MOST SEVERE OF CRITICS, BUT —
A PERFECT WIFE!

ADVERTISEMENT

(1845)

THE general reader whose attention has not been specially drawn to the subject which these volumes aim to illustrate — the Condition of the People — might suspect that the Writer had been tempted to some exaggeration in the scenes that he has drawn, and the impressions he has wished to convey. He thinks it therefore due to himself to state that the descriptions, generally, are written from his own observation; but while he hopes he has alleged nothing which is not true, he has found the absolute necessity of suppressing much that is genuine. For so little do we know of the state of our own country, that the air of improbability which the whole truth would inevitably throw over these pages, might deter some from their perusal.

GROSVENOR GATE:
May-Day, 1845.

SYBIL

OR

THE TWO NATIONS

CHAPTER I.

The Eve of the Derby.

'I'LL take the odds against Caravan.'

'In ponies?'

'Done.'

And Lord Milford, a young noble, entered in his book the bet which he had just made with Mr. Latour, a grey-headed member of the Jockey Club.

It was the eve of the Derby of 1837. In a vast and golden saloon, that in its decorations would have become, and in its splendour would not have disgraced, Versailles in the days of the grand monarch, were assembled many whose hearts beat at the thought of the morrow, and whose brains still laboured to control its fortunes to their advantage.

'They say that Caravan looks puffy,' lisped, in a low voice, a young man lounging on the edge of a

buhl table that had once belonged to a Mortemart, and dangling a rich cane with affected indifference, in order to conceal his anxiety from all, except the person whom he addressed.

'They are taking seven to two against him freely over the way,' was the reply. 'I believe it's all right.'

'Do you know I dreamed last night something about Mango?' continued the gentleman with the cane, and with a look of uneasy superstition.

His companion shook his head.

'Well,' continued the gentleman with the cane, 'I have no opinion of him. I betted Charles Egremont the odds against Mango this morning; he goes with us, you know. By-the-bye, who is our fourth?'

'I thought of Milford,' was the reply in an under tone. 'What say you?'

'Milford is going with St. James and Punch Hughes.'

'Well, let us come in to supper, and we shall see some fellow we like.'

So saying, the companions, taking their course through more than one chamber, entered an apartment of less dimensions than the principal saloon, but not less sumptuous in its general appearance. The gleaming lustres poured a flood of soft yet brilliant light over a plateau glittering with gold plate, and fragrant with exotics embedded in vases of rare porcelain. The seats on each side of the table were occupied by persons consuming, with a heedless air, delicacies for which they had no appetite; while the conversation in general consisted of flying phrases referring to the impending event of the great day that had already dawned.

'Come from Lady St. Julians', Fitz?' said a youth of tender years, whose fair visage was as downy and as blooming as the peach from which, with a languid air, he withdrew his lips to make this inquiry of the gentleman with the cane.

'Yes; why were not you there?'

'I never go anywhere,' replied the melancholy Cupid, 'everything bores me so.'

'Well, will you go to Epsom with us to-morrow, Alfred?' said Lord Fitz-Heron. 'I take Berners and Charles Egremont, and with you our party will be perfect.'

'I feel so cursed *blasé*!' exclaimed the boy in a tone of elegant anguish.

'It will give you a fillip, Alfred,' said Mr. Berners; 'do you all the good in the world.'

'Nothing can do me good,' said Alfred, throwing away his almost untasted peach; 'I should be quite content if anything could do me harm. Waiter, bring me a tumbler of Badminton.'

'And bring me one too,' sighed out Lord Eugene de Vere, who was a year older than Alfred Mountchesney, his companion and brother in listlessness. Both had exhausted life in their teens, and all that remained for them was to mourn, amid the ruins of their reminiscences, over the extinction of excitement.

'Well, Eugene, suppose you come with us,' said Lord Fitz-Heron.

'I think I shall go down to Hampton Court and play tennis,' said Lord Eugene. 'As it is the Derby, nobody will be there.'

'And I will go with you, Eugene,' said Alfred Mountchesney, 'and we will dine together afterwards

at the Toy. Anything is better than dining in this infernal London.'

'Well, for my part,' said Mr. Berners, 'I do not like your suburban dinners. You always get something you can't eat, and cursed bad wine.'

'I rather like bad wine,' said Mr. Mountchesney; 'one gets so bored with good wine.'

'Do you want the odds against Hybiscus, Berners?' said a guardsman, looking up from his book, which he had been intently studying.

'All I want is some supper, and as you are not using your place—'

'You shall have it. Oh! here's Milford, he will bet me them.'

And at this moment entered the room the young nobleman whom we have before mentioned, accompanied by an individual who was approaching perhaps the termination of his fifth lustre, but whose general air rather betokened even a less experienced time of life. Tall, with a well-proportioned figure and a graceful carriage, his countenance touched with a sensibility that at once engages the affections, Charles Egremont was not only admired by that sex whose approval generally secures men enemies among their fellows, but was at the same time the favourite of his own.

'Ah, Egremont! come and sit here,' exclaimed more than one banqueter.

'I saw you waltzing with the little Bertie, old fellow,' said Lord Fitz-Heron, 'and therefore did not stay to speak to you, as I thought we should meet here. I am to call for you, mind.'

'How shall we all feel this time to-morrow?' said Egremont, smiling.

'The happiest fellow at this moment must be Cockie Graves,' said Lord Milford. 'He can have no suspense. I have been looking over his book, and I defy him, whatever happens, not to lose.'

'Poor Cockie,' said Mr. Berners; 'he has asked me to dine with him at the Clarendon on Saturday.'

'Cockie is a very good Cockie,' said Lord Milford, 'and Caravan is a very good horse; and if any gentleman sportsman present wishes to give seven to two, I will take him to any amount.'

'My book is made up,' said Egremont: 'and I stand or fall by Caravan.'

'And I.'

'And I.'

'And I.'

'Well, mark my words,' said a fourth, rather solemnly, 'Rat-trap wins.'

'There is not a horse except Caravan,' said Lord Milford, 'fit for a borough stake.'

'You used to be all for Phosphorus, Egremont,' said Lord Eugene de Vere.

'Yes; but fortunately I have got out of that scrape. I owe Phlop. Dormer a good turn for that. I was the third man who knew he had gone lame.'

'And what are the odds against him now?'

'Oh! nominal; forty to one; what you please.'

'He won't run,' said Mr. Berners, 'John Day told me he had refused to ride him.'

'I believe Cockie Graves might win something if Phosphorus came in first,' said Lord Milford, laughing.

'How close it is to-night!' said Egremont. 'Waiter, give me some seltzer water; and open another window; open them all.'

At this moment an influx of guests intimated that the assembly at Lady St. Julians' had broken up. Many at the table rose and yielded their places, clustering round the chimney-piece, or forming in various groups, and discussing the great question. Several of those who had recently entered were votaries of Rattrap, the favourite, and quite prepared, from all the information that had reached them, to back their opinions valiantly. The conversation had now become general and animated, or rather there was a medley of voices in which little was distinguished except the names of horses and the amount of odds. In the midst of all this, waiters glided about, handing incomprehensible mixtures bearing aristocratic names; mystical combinations of French wines and German waters, flavoured with slices of Portugal fruits, and cooled with lumps of American ice, compositions which immortalized the creative genius of some high patrician name.

'By Jove! that's a flash!' exclaimed Lord Milford, as a blaze of lightning seemed to suffuse the chamber, and the beaming lustres turned white and ghastly in the glare.

The thunder rolled over the building. There was a dead silence. Was it going to rain? Was it going to pour? Was the storm confined to the metropolis? Would it reach Epsom? A deluge, and the course would be a quagmire and strength might baffle speed.

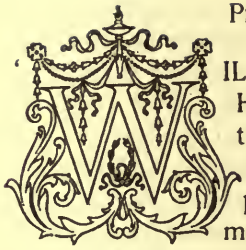
Another flash, another explosion, the hissing noise of rain. Lord Milford moved aside, and, jealous of the eye of another, read a letter from Chifney, and in a few minutes afterwards offered to take the odds against Pocket Hercules. Mr. Latour walked to the window, surveyed the heavens, sighed that there was

not time to send his tiger from the door to Epsom, and get information whether the storm had reached the Surrey hills, for to-night's operations. It was too late. So he took a rusk and a glass of lemonade, and retired to rest with a cool head and a cooler heart.

The storm raged, the incessant flash played as it were round the burnished cornice of the chamber, and threw a lurid hue on the scenes of Watteau and Boucher that sparkled in the medallions over the lofty doors. The thunderbolts seemed to descend in clattering confusion upon the roof. Sometimes there was a moment of dead silence, broken only by the pattering of the rain in the street without, or the pattering of the dice in a chamber at hand. Then horses were backed, bets made, and there were loud and frequent calls for brimming goblets from hurrying waiters, distracted by the lightning and deafened by the peal. It seemed a scene and a supper where the marble guest of Juan might have been expected; and, had he arrived, he would have found probably hearts as bold and spirits as reckless as he encountered in Andalusia.

CHAPTER II.

Phosphorus Wins!



'Will any one do anything about Hybiscus?' sang out a gentleman in the ring at Epsom. It was full of eager groups; round the betting post a swarming cluster, while the magic circle itself was surrounded by a host of horsemen shouting from their saddles the odds they were ready to receive or give, and the names of the horses they were prepared to back or to oppose.

'Will any one do anything about Hybiscus?'

'I'll bet you five to one,' said a tall, stiff Saxon peer, in a white great-coat.

'No; I'll take six.'

The tall, stiff peer in the white great-coat mused for a moment with his pencil at his lip, and then said, 'Well, I'll bet you six. What do you say about Mango?'

'Eleven to two against Mango,' called out a little hump-backed man in a shrill voice, but with the air of one who was master of his work.

'I should like to do a little business with you, Mr. Chippendale, said Lord Milford, in a coaxing tone, 'but I must have six to one.'

'Eleven to two, and no mistake,' said this keeper of a second-rate gaming-house, who, known by the flattering appellation of Hump Chippendale, now turned with malignant abruptness from the heir-apparent of an English earldom.

'You shall have six to one, my lord,' said Captain Spruce, a debonair personage, with a well-turned silk hat arranged a little aside, his coloured cravat tied with precision, his whiskers trimmed like a quickset hedge. Spruce, who had earned his title of Captain on the plains of Newmarket, which had witnessed for many a year his successful exploits, had a weakness for the aristocracy, who, knowing his graceful infirmity, patronized him with condescending dexterity, acknowledged his existence in Pall-Mall as well as at Tattersall's, and thus occasionally got a point more than the betting out of him. Hump Chippendale had none of these gentle failings; he was a democratic leg, who loved to fleece a noble, and thought all men were born equal; a consoling creed that was a hedge for his hump.

'Seven to four against the favourite; seven to two against Caravan; eleven to two against Mango. What about Benedict? Will any one do anything about Pocket Hercules? Thirty to one against Dardanelles.'

'Done.'

'Five-and-thirty ponies to one against Phosphorus,' shouted a little man vociferously and repeatedly.

'I will bet forty,' said Lord Milford. No answer; nothing done.

'Forty to one!' murmured Egremont, who stood against Phosphorus. A little nervous, he said to the peer in the white great-coat, 'Don't you think that Phosphorus may, after all, have some chance?'

'I should be cursed sorry to be deep against him,' said the peer.

Egremont with a quivering lip walked away. He consulted his book; he meditated anxiously. Should he hedge? It was scarcely worth while to mar the symmetry of his winnings; he stood 'so well' by all the favourites; and for a horse at forty to one. No; he would trust his star, he would not hedge.

'Mr. Chippendale,' whispered the peer in the white great-coat, 'go and press Mr. Egremont about Phosphorus. I should not be surprised if you got a good thing.'

At this moment, a huge, broad-faced, rosy-gilled fellow, with one of those good-humoured yet cunning countenances that we meet occasionally north of the Trent, rode up to the ring on a square cob, and, dismounting, entered the circle. He was a carcase-butcher famous in Carnaby-market, and the prime counsellor of a distinguished nobleman, for whom privately he betted on commission. His secret service to-day was to bet against his noble employer's own horse, and so he at once sung out, 'Twenty to one against Man-trap.'

A young gentleman just launched into the world, and who, proud of his ancient and spreading acres, was now making his first book, seeing Man-trap marked eighteen to one on the cards, jumped eagerly at this bargain, while Lord Fitz-Heron and Mr. Berners, who were at hand, and who in their days had found their names in the book of the carcase-butcher, and grown wise by it, interchanged a smile.

'Mr. Egremont will not take,' said Hump Chippendale to the peer in the white great-coat.

'You must have been too eager,' said his noble friend.

The ring is up; the last odds declared; all gallop away to the Warren. A few minutes, only a few minutes, and the event that for twelve months has been the pivot of so much calculation, of such subtle combinations, of such deep conspiracies, round which the thought and passion of the sporting world have hung like eagles, will be recorded in the fleeting tablets of the past. But what minutes! Count them by sensation, and not by calendars, and each moment is a day and the race a life. Hogarth, in a coarse and yet animated sketch, has painted 'Before' and 'After.' A creative spirit of a higher vein might develop the simplicity of the idea with sublimer accessories. Pompeius before Pharsalia, Harold before Hastings, Napoleon before Waterloo, might afford some striking contrasts to the immediate catastrophe of their fortunes. Finer still, the inspired mariner who has just discovered a new world; the sage who has revealed a new planet; and yet the 'Before' and 'After' of a first-rate English race, in the degree of its excitement, and sometimes in the tragic emotions of its close, may vie even with these.

They are saddling the horses; Caravan looks in great condition; and a scornful smile seems to play upon the handsome features of Pavis, as, in the becoming colours of his employer, he gracefully gallops his horse before his admiring supporters. Egremont, in the delight of an English patrician, scarcely saw Mango, and never even thought of Phosphorus; Phosphorus, who, by-the-bye, was the first horse that showed, with both his forelegs bandaged.

They are off!

As soon as they are well away, Chifney makes the running with Pocket Hercules. Up to the Rubbing House he is leading; this is the only point the eye can select. Higher up the hill, Caravan, Hybiscus, Benedict, Mahometan, Phosphorus, Michel Fell, and Rat-trap are with the grey, forming a front rank, and at the new ground the pace has told its tale, for half a dozen are already out of the race.

The summit is gained; the tactics alter: here Pavis brings up Caravan, with extraordinary severity; the pace round Tattenham corner terrific; Caravan leading, then Phosphorus a little above him, Mahometan next, Hybiscus fourth, Rat-trap looking badly, Wisdom, Benedict, and another handy. By this time Pocket Hercules has enough, and at the road the tailing grows at every stride. Here the favourite himself is *hors de combat,* as well as Dardanelles, and a crowd of lesser celebrities.

There are now but four left in the race, and of these, two, Hybiscus and Mahometan, are some lengths behind. Now it is neck and neck between Caravan and Phosphorus. At the stand, Caravan has decidedly the best; but just at the post, Edwards, on Phosphorus, lifts the gallant little horse, and with an extraordinary effort contrives to shove him in by half a length.

'You look a little low, Charley,' said Lord Fitz-Heron, as taking their lunch in their drag, he poured the champagne into the glass of Egremont.

'By Jove!' said Lord Milford, 'only think of Cockie Graves having gone and done it!'

CHAPTER III.

The House of Egremont.

EGREMONT was the younger brother of an English earl, whose nobility, being of nearly three centuries' date, ranked him among our high and ancient peers, although its origin was more memorable than illustrious. The founder of the family had been a confidential domestic of one of the favourites of Henry VIII., and had contrived to be appointed one of the commissioners for 'visiting and taking the surrenders of divers religious houses.' It came to pass that divers of these religious houses surrendered themselves eventually to the use and benefit of honest Baldwin Greymount. The king was touched with the activity and zeal of his commissioner. Not one of them whose reports were so ample and satisfactory, who could baffle a wily prior with more dexterity, or control a proud abbot with more firmness. Nor were they well-digested reports alone that were transmitted to the Sovereign: they came accompanied with many rare and curious articles, grateful to the taste of one who was not only a religious reformer but a dilettante; golden candlesticks and costly chalices;

sometimes a jewelled pyx; fantastic spoons and patens, rings for the fingers and the ear; occasionally a fair-written and blazoned manuscript: suitable offering to the royal scholar. Greymount was noticed; sent for; promoted in the household; knighted; might doubtless have been sworn of the council, and in due time have become a minister; but his was a discreet ambition, of an accumulative rather than an aspiring character. He served the king faithfully in all domestic matters that required an unimpassioned, unscrupulous agent; fashioned his creed and conscience according to the royal model in all its freaks; seized the right moment to get sundry grants of abbey lands, and contrived in that dangerous age to save both his head and his estate.

The Greymount family having planted themselves in the land, faithful to the policy of the founder, avoided the public gaze during the troubled period that followed the reformation; and even during the more orderly reign of Elizabeth, rather sought their increase in alliances than in court favour. But at the commencement of the seventeenth century, their abbey lands infinitely advanced in value, and their rental swollen by the prudent accumulation of more than seventy years, a Greymount, who was then a county member, was elevated to the peerage as Baron Marney. The heralds furnished his pedigree, and assured the world that, although the exalted rank and extensive possessions enjoyed at present by the Greymounts had their origin immediately in great territorial revolutions of a recent reign, it was not for a moment to be supposed that the remote ancestors of the Ecclesiastical Commissioner of 1530 were by any means obscure. On the contrary, it appeared that they were

both Norman and baronial, their real name Egremont, which, in their patent of peerage, the family now resumed.

In the civil wars the Egremonts, pricked by their Norman blood, were cavaliers, and fought pretty well. But in 1688, alarmed at the prevalent impression that King James intended to insist on the restitution of the Church estates to their original purposes, to wit, the education of the people and the maintenance of the poor, the Lord of Marney Abbey became a warm adherent of 'civil and religious liberty,' the cause for which Hampden had died in the field, and Russell on the scaffold, and joined the other Whig lords, and great lay impropriators, in calling over the Prince of Orange and a Dutch army, to vindicate those popular principles which, somehow or other, the people would never support. Profiting by this last pregnant circumstance, the lay abbot of Marney, also in this instance like the other Whig lords, was careful to maintain, while he vindicated the cause of civil and religious liberty, a loyal and dutiful though secret correspondence with the court of St. Germains.

The great deliverer, King William III., to whom Lord Marney was a systematic traitor, made the descendant of the Ecclesiastical Commissioner of Henry VIII. an English earl; and from that time until the period of our history, though the Marney family had never produced one individual eminent for civil or military abilities, though the country was not indebted to them for a single statesman, orator, successful warrior, great lawyer, learned divine, eminent author, illustrious man of science, they had contrived, if not to engross any great share of public admiration and love, at least to monopolise no contemptible portion of public

money and public dignities. During the seventy years of almost unbroken Whig rule, from the accession of the House of Hanover to the fall of Mr. Fox, Marney Abbey had furnished a never-failing crop of lord privy seals, lord presidents, and lord lieutenants. The family had had their due quota of garters and governments and bishoprics; admirals without fleets, and generals who fought only in America. They had glittered in great embassies with clever secretaries at their elbow, and had once governed Ireland, when to govern Ireland was only to apportion the public plunder to a corrupt senate.

Notwithstanding, however, this prolonged enjoyment of undeserved prosperity, the lay abbots of Marney were not content. Not that it was satiety which induced dissatisfaction. The Egremonts could feed on. They wanted something more. Not to be prime ministers or secretaries of state, for they were a shrewd race who knew the length of their tether, and notwithstanding the encouraging example of his Grace of Newcastle, they could not resist the persuasion that some knowledge of the interests and resources of nations, some power of expressing opinions with propriety, some degree of respect for the public and for himself, were not altogether indispensable qualifications even under a Venetian constitution, in an individual who aspired to a post so eminent and responsible. Satisfied with the stars and mitres, and official seals, which were periodically apportioned to them, the Marney family did not aspire to the somewhat graceless office of being their distributor. What they aimed at was promotion in their order; and promotion to the highest class. They observed that more than one of the other great 'civil

and religious liberty' families, the families who in one century plundered the Church to gain the property of the people and in another century changed the dynasty to gain the power of the crown, had their brows circled with the strawberry leaf. And why should not this distinction be the high lot also of the descendants of the old gentleman-usher of one of King Henry's plundering vicar-generals? Why not? True it is, that a grateful sovereign in our days has deemed such distinction the only reward for half a hundred victories. True it is, that Nelson, after conquering the Mediterranean, died only a viscount! But the house of Marney had risen to high rank, counted themselves ancient nobility; and turned up their noses at the Pratts and the Smiths, the Jenkinsons and the Robinsons of our degenerate days; and never had done anything for the nation or for their honours. And why should they now? It was unreasonable to expect it. Civil and religious liberty, that had given them a broad estate and glittering coronet, to say nothing of half-a-dozen close seats in Parliament, ought clearly to make them dukes.

But the other great Whig families who had obtained this honour, and who had done something more for it than spoliate their Church and betray their king, set up their backs against this claim of the Egremonts. The Egremonts had done none of the work of the last hundred years of political mystification, during which a people without power or education had been induced to believe themselves the freest and most enlightened nation in the world, and had submitted to lavish their blood and treasure, to see their industry crippled and their labour mortgaged, in order to maintain an oligarchy that had neither

ancient memories to soften nor present services to justify their unprecedented usurpation.

How had the Egremonts contributed to this prodigious result? Their family had furnished none of those artful orators whose bewildering phrase had fascinated the public intelligence; none of those toilsome patricians whose assiduity in affairs had convinced their unprivileged fellow-subjects that government was a science, and administration an art, which demanded the devotion of a peculiar class in the state for their fulfilment and pursuit. The Egremonts had never said anything that was remembered, or done anything that could be recalled. It was decided by the Great Revolution families that they should not be dukes. Infinite was the indignation of the lay abbot of Marney. He counted his boroughs, consulted his cousins, and muttered revenge. The opportunity soon offered for the gratification of his passion.

The situation of the Venetian party in the wane of the eighteenth century had become extremely critical. A young king was making often fruitless, but always energetic, struggles to emancipate his national royalty from the trammels of the factious dogeship. More than sixty years of a government of singular corruption had alienated all hearts from the oligarchy; never indeed much affected by the great body of the people. It could no longer be concealed that, by virtue of a plausible phrase, power had been transferred from the crown to a parliament, the members of which were appointed by a limited and exclusive class, who owned no responsibility to the country, who debated and voted in secret, and who were regularly paid by the small knot of great families that by this machinery had secured the permanent possession of

the king's treasury. Whiggism was putrescent in the nostrils of the nation; we were probably on the eve of a bloodless yet important revolution; when Rockingham, a virtuous magnifico, alarmed and disgusted, resolved to revive something of the pristine purity and high-toned energy of the old Whig connection, appealed to his 'new generation' from a degenerate age, arrayed under his banner the generous youth of the Whig families, and was fortunate to enlist in the service the supreme genius of Edmund Burke.

Burke effected for the Whigs what Bolingbroke in a preceding age had done for the Tories: he restored the moral existence of the party. He taught them to recur to the ancient principles of their connection, and suffused those principles with all the delusive splendour of his imagination. He raised the tone of their public discourse; he breathed a high spirit into their public acts. It was in his power to do more for the Whigs than St. John could do for his party. The oligarchy, who had found it convenient to attaint Bolingbroke for being the avowed minister of the English Prince with whom they were always in secret communication, when opinion forced them to consent to his restitution, had tacked to the amnesty a clause as cowardly as it was unconstitutional, and declared his incompetence to sit in the parliament of his country. Burke, on the contrary, fought the Whig fight with a two-edged weapon: he was a great writer; as an orator he was transcendent. In a dearth of that public talent for the possession of which the Whigs have generally been distinguished, Burke came forward and established them alike in the parliament and the country. And what was his reward? No

sooner had a young and dissolute noble, who, with some of the aspirations of a Cæsar, oftener realised the conduct of a Catiline, appeared on the stage, and after some inglorious tergiversation adopted their colours, than they transferred to him the command which had been won by wisdom and genius, vindicated by unrivalled knowledge, and adorned by accomplished eloquence. When the hour arrived for the triumph which he had prepared, he was not even admitted into the Cabinet, virtually presided over by his graceless pupil, who, in the profuse suggestions of his teeming converse, had found the principles and the information which were among the chief claims to public confidence of Mr. Fox.

Hard necessity made Mr. Burke submit to the yoke, but the humiliation could never be forgotten. Nemesis favours genius; the inevitable hour at length arrived. A voice like the Apocalypse sounded over England, and even echoed in all the courts of Europe. Burke poured forth the vials of his hoarded vengeance into the agitated heart of Christendom; he stimulated the panic of a world by the wild pictures of his inspired imagination; he dashed to the ground the rival who had robbed him of his hard-earned greatness; rent in twain the proud oligarchy that had dared to use and to insult him; and, followed with servility by the haughtiest and the most timid of its members, amid the frantic exultation of his country, he placed his heel upon the neck of the ancient serpent.

Among the Whig followers of Mr. Burke in this memorable defection, among the Devonshires and the Portlands, the Spencers and the Fitzwilliams, was the Earl of Marney, whom the Whigs would not make a duke.

What was his chance of success from Mr. Pitt?

If the history of England be ever written by one who has the knowledge and the courage, and both qualities are equally requisite for the undertaking, the world would be more astonished than when reading the Roman annals by Niebuhr. Generally speaking, all the great events have been distorted, most of the important causes concealed, some of the principal characters never appear, and all who figure are so misunderstood and misrepresented, that the result is a complete mystification, and the perusal of the narrative about as profitable to an Englishman as reading the Republic of Plato or the Utopia of More, the pages of Gaudentio di Lucca or the adventures of Peter Wilkins.

The influence of races in our early ages, of the Church in our middle, and of parties in our modern history, are three great moving and modifying powers, that must be pursued and analysed with an untiring, profound, and unimpassioned spirit, before a guiding ray can be secured. A remarkable feature of our written history is the absence in its pages of some of the most influential personages. Not one man in a thousand, for instance, has ever heard of Major Wildman: yet he was the soul of English politics in the most eventful period of this kingdom, and one most interesting to this age, from 1640 to 1688; and seemed more than once to hold the balance which was to decide the permanent forms of our government. But he was the leader of an unsuccessful party. Even, comparatively speaking, in our own times, the same mysterious oblivion is sometimes encouraged to creep over personages of great social distinction as well as political importance.

The name of the second Pitt remains, fresh after forty years of great events, a parliamentary beacon. He was the Chatterton of politics; the 'marvellous boy.' Some have a vague impression that he was mysteriously moulded by his great father; that he inherited the genius, the eloquence, the statecraft of Chatham. His genius was of a different bent, his eloquence of a different class, his statecraft of a different school. To understand Mr. Pitt, one must understand one of the suppressed characters of English history, and that is Lord Shelburne.

When the fine genius of the injured Bolingbroke, the only peer of his period who was educated, and proscribed by the oligarchy because they were afraid of his eloquence, 'the glory of his order and the shame,' shut out from Parliament, found vent in those writings which recalled to the English people the inherent blessings of their old free monarchy, and painted in immortal hues his picture of a patriot king, the spirit that he raised at length touched the heart of Carteret, born a Whig, yet sceptical of the advantages of that patrician constitution which made the Duke of Newcastle, the most incompetent of men, but the chosen leader of the Venetian party, virtually Sovereign of England. Lord Carteret had many brilliant qualities: he was undaunted, enterprising, eloquent; had considerable knowledge of continental politics, was a great linguist, a master of public law; and though he failed in his premature effort to terminate the dogeship of George II., he succeeded in maintaining a considerable though secondary position in public life. The young Shelburne married his daughter. Of him it is singular we know less than of his father-in-law, yet from the scattered traits some

idea may be formed of the ablest and most accomplished minister of the eighteenth century. Lord Shelburne, influenced probably by the example and the traditionary precepts of his eminent father-in-law, appears early to have held himself aloof from the patrician connection, and entered public life as the follower of Bute in the first great effort of George III. to rescue the sovereignty from what Lord Chatham called 'the Great Revolution families.' He became in time a member of Lord Chatham's last administration; one of the strangest and most unsuccessful efforts to aid the grandson of George II. in his struggle for political emancipation. Lord Shelburne adopted from the first the Bolingbroke system; a real royalty, in lieu of the chief magistracy; a permanent alliance with France, instead of the Whig scheme of viewing in that power the natural enemy of England; and, above all, a plan of commercial freedom, the germ of which may be found in the long-maligned negotiations of Utrecht, but which, in the instance of Lord Shelburne, were soon in time matured by all the economical science of Europe, in which he was a proficient. Lord Shelburne seems to have been of a reserved and somewhat astute disposition: deep and adroit, he was however brave and firm. His knowledge was extensive and even profound. He was a great linguist; he pursued both literary and scientific investigations; his house was frequented by men of letters, especially those distinguished by their political abilities or economical attainments. He maintained the most extensive private correspondence of any public man of his time. The earliest and most authentic information reached him from all courts and quarters of Europe; and it was a common phrase that the minister of the

day sent to him often for the important information which the cabinet could not itself command. Lord Shelburne was the first great minister who comprehended the rising importance of the middle class, and foresaw in its future power a bulwark for the throne against 'the Great Revolution families.' Of his qualities in council we have no record; there is reason to believe that his administrative ability was conspicuous; his speeches prove that, if not supreme, he was eminent, in the art of parliamentary disputation, while they show on all the questions discussed a richness and variety of information, with which the speeches of no statesman of that age except Mr. Burke can compare.

Such was the man selected by George III. as his champion against the Venetian party, after the termination of the American war. The prosecution of that war they had violently opposed, though it had originated in their own policy. First minister in the House of Lords, Shelburne entrusted the lead in the House of Commons to his Chancellor of the Exchequer, the youthful Pitt. The administration was brief, but it was not inglorious. It obtained peace, and, for the first time since the Revolution, introduced into modern debate the legitimate principles on which commerce should be conducted. It fell before the famous Coalition with which 'the Great Revolution families' commenced their fiercest and their last contention for the patrician government of royal England.

In the heat of that great strife, the king, in the second hazardous exercise of his prerogative, entrusted the perilous command to Pitt. Why Lord Shelburne on that occasion was set aside, will per-

haps always remain a mysterious passage of our political history, nor have we space on the present occasion to attempt to penetrate its motives. Perhaps the monarch, with a sense of the rising sympathies of his people, was prescient of the magic power of youth in touching the heart of a nation. Yet it would not be an unprofitable speculation, if for a moment we pause to consider what might have been the consequences to our country if Mr. Pitt had been content for a season again to lead the Commons under Lord Shelburne, and to have secured for England the unrivalled knowledge and dexterity of that statesman in the conduct of our affairs during the confounding fortunes of the French revolution. Lord Shelburne was the only English minister competent to the place: he was the only public man who had the previous knowledge requisite to form accurate conclusions on such a conjuncture; his remaining speeches on the subject attest the amplitude of his knowledge and the accuracy of his views; and in the rout of Jena, or the agony of Austerlitz, one cannot refrain from picturing the shade of Shelburne haunting the cabinet of Pitt, as the ghost of Canning is said occasionally to linger about the Speaker's chair, and smile sarcastically on the conscientious mediocrities who pilfered his hard-earned honours.

But, during the happier years of Mr. Pitt, the influence of the mind of Shelburne may be traced throughout his policy. It was Lansdowne House that made Pitt acquainted with Dr. Price, a dissenting minister, whom Lord Shelburne, when at the head of affairs, courageously offered to make his private secretary, and who furnished Mr. Pitt, among other important suggestions, with his original plan of the

sinking fund. The commercial treaties of '87 were struck in the same mint, and are notable as the first effort made by the English government to emancipate the country from the restrictive policy which had been introduced by the 'glorious revolution;' memorable epoch, that presented England at the same time with a corn-law and a public debt. But on no subject was the magnetic influence of the descendant of Sir William Petty more decided, than in the resolution of his pupil to curb the power of the patrician party by an infusion from the middle classes into the government of the country. Hence the origin of Mr. Pitt's famous and long-misconceived plans of parliamentary reform. Was he sincere, is often asked by those who neither seek to discover the causes, nor are capable of calculating the effects of public transactions. Sincere! Why, he was struggling for his existence! And when, baffled, first by the Venetian party, and afterwards by the panic of Jacobinism, he was forced to forego his direct purpose, he still endeavoured partially to effect it by a circuitous process. He created a plebeian aristocracy and blended it with the patrician oligarchy. He made peers of second-rate squires and fat graziers. He caught them in the alleys of Lombard Street, and clutched them from the counting-houses of Cornhill. When Mr. Pitt, in an age of Bank restriction, declared that every man with an estate of ten thousand a year had a right to be a peer, he sounded the knell of 'the cause for which Hampden had died on the field, and Sidney on the scaffold.'

In ordinary times the pupil of Shelburne would have raised this country to a state of great material prosperity, and removed or avoided many of those

anomalies which now perplex us; but he was not destined for ordinary times; and, though his capacity was vast and his spirit lofty, he had not that passionate and creative genius required by an age of revolution. The French outbreak was his evil dæmon: he had not the means of calculating its effects upon Europe. He had but a meagre knowledge himself of continental politics: he was assisted by an inefficient diplomacy. His mind was lost in a convulsion of which he neither could comprehend the causes nor calculate the consequences; and, forced to act, he acted not only violently, but in exact opposition to the very system he was called into political existence to combat; he appealed to the fears, the prejudices, and the passions of a privileged class, revived the old policy of the oligarchy he had extinguished, and plunged into all the ruinous excesses of French war and Dutch finance.

If it be a salutary principle in the investigation of historical transactions, to be careful in discriminating the cause from the pretext, there is scarcely any instance in which the application of this principle is more fertile in results, than in that of the Dutch invasion of 1688. The real cause of this invasion was financial. The Prince of Orange had found that the resources of Holland, however considerable, were inadequate to sustain him in his internecine rivalry with the great Sovereign of France. In an authentic conversation which has descended to us, held by William at The Hague with one of the prime abettors of the invasion, the prince did not disguise his motives; he said, 'Nothing but such a constitution as you have in England can have the credit that is necessary to raise such sums as a great war requires.'

The prince came, and used our constitution for his purpose: he introduced into England the system of Dutch finance. The principle of that system was to mortgage industry in order to protect property: abstractedly, nothing can be conceived more unjust; its practice in England has been equally injurious. In Holland, with a small population engaged in the same pursuits, in fact, a nation of bankers, the system was adapted to the circumstances which had created it. All shared in the present spoil, and therefore could endure the future burthen. And so to this day Holland is sustained, almost solely sustained, by the vast capital thus created which still lingers among its dykes. But applied to a country in which the circumstances were entirely different, to a considerable and rapidly-increasing population, where there was a numerous peasantry, a trading middle class struggling into existence, the system of Dutch finance, pursued more or less for nearly a century and a half, has ended in the degradation of a fettered and burthened multitude. Nor have the demoralising consequences of the funding system on the more favoured classes been less decided. It has made debt a national habit; it has made credit the ruling power, not the exceptional auxiliary, of all transactions; it has introduced a loose, inexact, haphazard, and dishonest spirit in the conduct of both public and private life; a spirit dazzling and yet dastardly; reckless of consequences and yet shrinking from responsibility. And in the end, it has so overstimulated the energies of the population to maintain the material engagements of the state, and of society at large, that the moral condition of the people has been entirely lost sight of.

A mortgaged aristocracy, a gambling foreign commerce, a home trade founded on a morbid competition, and a degraded people; these are great evils, but ought perhaps cheerfully to be encountered for the greater blessings of civil and religious liberty. Yet the first would seem in some degree to depend upon our Saxon mode of trial by our peers, upon the stipulations of the great Norman charters, upon the practice and the statute of Habeas Corpus, a principle native to our common law, but established by the Stuarts. Not in a careful perusal of the Bill of Rights, or in an impartial scrutiny of the subsequent legislation of those times, though some diminution of our political franchises must be confessed, is it easy to discover any increase of our civil privileges. To those, indeed, who believe that the English nation (at all times a religious and Catholic people, but who even in the days of the Plantagenets were anti-papal) were in any danger of again falling under the yoke of the Pope of Rome in the reign of James II., religious liberty was perhaps acceptable, though it took the shape of a discipline which at once anathematised a great portion of the nation, and, virtually establishing Puritanism in Ireland, laid the foundation of those mischiefs which are now endangering the empire.

That the last of the Stuarts had any other object in his impolitic manœuvres than an impracticable scheme to blend the two Churches, there is now authority to disbelieve. He certainly was guilty of the offence of sending an envoy openly to Rome, who, by-the-bye, was received by the Pope with great discourtesy; and her Majesty Queen Victoria, whose Protestantism cannot be doubted, for it is one of her chief titles to our homage, has at this time a

secret envoy at the same court; and that is the difference between them: both ministers doubtless working, however fruitlessly, for the same object, the termination of those terrible misconceptions, political and religious, that have occasioned so many martyrdoms, and so many crimes alike to sovereigns and to subjects.

If James II. had really attempted to re-establish Popery in this country, the English people, who had no hand in his overthrow, would doubtless soon have stirred and secured their 'Catholic and Apostolic Church,' independent of any foreign dictation; the Church to which they still regularly profess their adherence; and being a practical people, it is possible that they might have achieved their object and yet retained their native princes; under which circumstances we might have been saved from the triple blessings of Venetian politics, Dutch finance, and French wars: against which, in their happiest days, and with their happiest powers, struggled the three greatest of English statesmen, Bolingbroke, Shelburne, and, lastly, the son of Chatham.

We have endeavoured in another work, not we hope without something of the impartiality of the future, to sketch the character and career of his successors. From his death to 1825, the political history of England is a history of great events and little men. The rise of Mr. Canning, long kept down by the plebeian aristocracy of Mr. Pitt as an adventurer, had shaken parties to their centre. His rapid disappearance from the scene left both Whigs and Tories in a state of disorganisation. The distinctive principles of these connections were now difficult to trace. That period of public languor which intervenes between the breaking up of parties and the formation of factions now

succeeded in England. An exhausted sensualist on the throne, who only demanded from his ministers repose, a voluptuous aristocracy, and a listless people, were content, in the absence of all public conviction and national passion, to consign the government of the country to a great man, whose decision relieved the Sovereign, whose prejudices pleased the nobles, and whose achievements dazzled the multitude.

The Duke of Wellington brought to the post of first minister immortal fame; a quality of success which would almost seem to include all others. His public knowledge was such as might be expected from one whose conduct already formed an important portion of the history of his country. He had a personal and intimate acquaintance with the sovereigns and chief statesmen of Europe, a kind of information in which English ministers have generally been deficient, but without which the management of our external affairs must at the best be haphazard. He possessed administrative talents of the highest order.

The tone of the age, the temper of the country, the great qualities and the high character of the minister, indicated a long and prosperous administration. The only individual in his cabinet who, from a combination of circumstances rather than from any intellectual supremacy over his colleagues, was competent to be his rival, was content to be his successor. In his most aspiring moments, Mr. Peel, in all probability, aimed at no higher reach; and with youth and the leadership of the House of Commons, one has no reason to be surprised at his moderation. The conviction that the duke's government would only cease with the termination of his public career was

so general, that, the moment he was installed in office, the Whigs smiled on him; political conciliation became the slang of the day, and the fusion of parties the babble of clubs and the tattle of boudoirs.

How comes it, then, that so great a man, in so great a position, should have so signally failed; should have broken up his government, wrecked his party, and so completely annihilated his political position, that, even with his historical reputation to sustain him, he can since only re-appear in the councils of his Sovereign in a subordinate, not to say equivocal, character?

With all those great qualities which will secure him a place in our history not perhaps inferior even to Marlborough, the Duke of Wellington has one deficiency which has been the stumbling-block of his civil career. Bishop Burnet, in speculating on the extraordinary influence of Lord Shaftesbury, and accounting how a statesman so inconsistent in his conduct and so false to his confederates should have so powerfully controlled his country, observes, 'His STRENGTH LAY IN HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLAND.'

Now that is exactly the kind of knowledge which the Duke of Wellington never possessed.

When the king, finding that in Lord Goderich he had a minister who, instead of deciding, asked his royal master for advice, sent for the Duke of Wellington to undertake the government, a change in the carriage of his Grace was perceived by some who had the opportunity to form an opinion on such a subject. If one might venture to use such a word in reference to such a man, we might remark, that the duke had been somewhat daunted by the selection of Mr. Canning. It disappointed great hopes, it baffled great

plans, and dispelled for a season the conviction that, it is believed, had been long maturing in his Grace's mind; that he was the man of the age, that his military career had been only a preparation for a civil course not less illustrious; and that it was reserved for him to control for the rest of his life, undisputed, the destinies of a country which was indebted to him in no slight degree for its European pre-eminence. The death of Mr. Canning revived, the rout of Lord Goderich restored, these views.

Napoleon, at St. Helena, speculating in conversation on the future career of his conqueror, asked, 'What will Wellington do? After all he has done, he will not be content to be quiet. He will change the dynasty.'

Had the great exile been better acquainted with the real character of our Venetian constitution, he would have known that to govern England in 1820, it was not necessary to change its dynasty. But the Emperor, though wrong in surmise, was right in the main. It was clear that the energies which had twice entered Paris as a conqueror and had made kings and mediatised princes at Vienna, would not be content to subside into ermined insignificance. The duke commenced his political tactics early. The cabinet of Lord Liverpool, especially during its latter term, was the hot-bed of many intrigues; but the obstacles were numerous, though the appointing fate, in which his Grace believed, removed them. The disappearance of Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning from the scene was alike unexpected. The Duke of Wellington was at length prime minister, and no individual ever occupied that post more conscious of its power, and more determined to exercise it.

This is not the occasion on which we shall attempt to do justice to a theme so instructive as the administration of his Grace. Treated with impartiality and sufficient information, it would be an invaluable contribution to the stores of our political knowledge and national experience. Throughout its brief but eccentric and tumultuous annals we see continual proof, how important is that knowledge 'in which lay Lord Shaftesbury's strength.' In twenty-four months we find an aristocracy estranged, without a people being conciliated; while on two several occasions, first, the prejudices, and then the pretensions of the middle class, were alike treated with contumely. The public was astonished at hearing of statesmen of long parliamentary fame, men round whom the intelligence of the nation had gathered for years, if not with confidence, at least with interest, being expelled from the cabinet in a manner not unworthy of Colonel Joyce, while their places were filled by second-rate soldiers, whose very names were unknown to the great body of the people, and who, under no circumstances, should have aspired beyond the government of a colony. This administration, which commenced in arrogance, ended in panic. There was an interval of perplexity, when occurred the most ludicrous instance extant of an attempt at coalition; subordinates were promoted while negotiations were still pending with their chiefs; and these negotiations, undertaken so crudely, were terminated in pique, in a manner which added to political disappointment personal offence. When even his parasites began to look gloomy, the duke had a specific that was to restore all, and having allowed every element of power to escape his grasp, he believed he could balance everything by a

Beer Bill. The growl of reform was heard, but it was not very fierce. There was yet time to save himself. His Grace precipitated a revolution which might have been delayed for half a century, and never need have occurred in so aggravated a form. He rather fled than retired. He commenced his ministry like Brennus, and finished it like the tall Gaul sent to murder the rival of Sylla, but who dropped his weapon before the undaunted gaze of his intended victim.

Lord Marney was spared the pang of the catastrophe. Promoted to a high office in the household, and still hoping that, by the aid of his party, it was yet destined for him to achieve the hereditary purpose of his famity, he died in the full faith of dukism; worshipped the duke, and believing that ultimately he should himself become a duke. It was under all the circumstances a euthanasia; he expired leaning as it were on his white wand and babbling of strawberry-leaves.

CHAPTER IV.

An Important State Secret.

'MY DEAR Charles,' said Lady Marney to Egremont, the morning after the Derby, as breakfasting with her in her boudoir, he detailed some of the circumstances of the race, 'we must forget your naughty horse. I sent you a little note this morning, because I wished to see you most particularly before you went out. Affairs,' continued Lady Marney, first looking round the chamber to see whether there were any fairy listening to her state secrets, 'affairs are critical.'

'No doubt of that,' thought Egremont, the horrid phantom of settling-day seeming to obtrude itself between his mother and himself; but, not knowing precisely at what she was driving, he merely sipped his tea, and innocently replied, 'Why?'

'There will be a dissolution,' said Lady Marney.

'What! are we coming in?'

Lady Marney shook her head.

'The present men will not better their majority,' said Egremont.

'I hope not,' said Lady Marney.

'Why, you always said that, with another general election, we must come in, whoever dissolved.'

'But that was with the court in our favour,' rejoined Lady Marney, mournfully.

'What! has the king changed?' said Egremont. 'I thought it was all right.'

'All was right,' said Lady Marney. 'These men would have been turned out again, had he only lived three months longer.'

'Lived!' exclaimed Egremont.

'Yes,' said Lady Marney; 'the king is dying.'

Slowly delivering himself of an ejaculation, Egremont leant back in his chair.

'He may live a month,' said Lady Marney; 'he cannot live two. It is the greatest of secrets; known at this moment to only four individuals, and I communicate it to you, my dear Charles, in that absolute confidence which I hope will always subsist between us, because it is an event that may greatly affect your career.'

'How so, my dear mother?'

'Marbury! I have settled with Mr. Tadpole that you should stand for the old borough. With the government in our hands, as I had anticipated, at the general election success I think was certain: under the circumstances which we must encounter, the struggle will be more severe, but I think we shall do it: and it will be a happy day for me to have our own again, and to see you in Parliament, my dear child.'

'Well, my dear mother, I should like very much to be in Parliament, and particularly to sit for the old borough; but I fear the contest will be very expensive,' said Egremont, inquiringly.

'Oh! I have no doubt,' said Lady Marney, 'that we shall have some monster of the middle class, some tinker or tailor or candlestick-maker, with his long

purse, preaching reform and practising corruption; exactly as the Liberals did under Walpole: bribery was unknown in the time of the Stuarts; but we have a capital registration, Mr. Tadpole tells me. And a young candidate with the old name will tell,' said Lady Marney, with a smile: 'and I shall go down and canvass, and we must do what we can.'

'I have great faith in your canvassing,' said Egremont; 'but still at the same time, the powder and shot—'

'Are essential,' said Lady Marney, 'I know it, in these corrupt days; but Marney will of course supply those. It is the least he can do: regaining the family influence, and letting us hold up our heads again. I shall write to him the moment I am justified,' said Lady Marney, 'perhaps you will do so yourself, Charles.'

'Why, considering I have not seen my brother for two years, and we did not part on the best possible terms—'

'But that is all forgotten.'

'By your good offices, dear mother, who are always doing good: and yet,' continued Egremont, after a moment's pause, 'I am not disposed to write to Marney, especially to ask a favour.'

'Well, I will write,' said Lady Marney; 'though I cannot admit it as any favour. Perhaps it would be better that you should see him first. I cannot understand why he keeps so at the Abbey. I am sure I found it a melancholy place enough in my time. I wish you had gone down there, Charles, if it had been only for a few days.'

'Well, I did not, my dear mother, and I cannot go now. I shall trust to you. But are you quite sure that the king is going to die?'

'I repeat to you, it is certain,' replied Lady Marney, in a lowered voice, but decided tone; 'certain, certain, certain. My authority cannot be mistaken: but no consideration in the world must throw you off your guard at this moment; breathe not the shadow of what you know.'

At this moment a servant entered, and delivered a note to Lady Marney, who read it with an ironical smile. It was from Lady St. Julians, and ran thus:

'Most confidential.

'My Dearest Lady Marney, It is a false report; he is ill, but not dangerously; the hay fever; he always has it; nothing more; I will tell my authority when we meet; I dare not write it. It will satisfy you. I am going on with my quadrille.

'Most affectionately yours,

'A. St. J.'

'Poor woman! she is always wrong,' said Lady Marney, throwing the note to Egremont. 'Her quadrille will never take place, which is a pity, as it is to consist only of beauties and eldest sons. I suppose I must send her a line;' and she wrote:

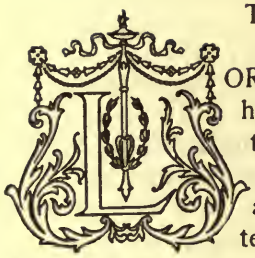
'My Dearest Lady St. Julians, How good of you to write to me, and send me such cheering news! I have no doubt you are right; you always are. I know he had the hay fever last year. How fortunate for your quadrille, and how charming it will be! Let me know if you hear anything further from your unmentionable quarter.

'Ever your affectionate

'C. M.'

CHAPTER V.

The Idle Rich.



ORD MARNEY left several children; his heir was five years older than the next son, Charles, who at the period of his father's death was at Christchurch, and had just entered the last year of his minority. Attaining that age, he received the sum of fifteen thousand pounds, his portion, a third of which amount his expenditure had then already anticipated. Egremont had been brought up in the enjoyment of every comfort and every luxury that refinement could devise and wealth furnish. He was a favourite child. His parents emulated each other in pampering and indulging him. Every freak was pardoned, every whim was gratified. He might ride what horses he liked, and if he broke their knees, what in another would have been deemed a flagrant sin, was in him held only a proof of reckless spirit. If he were not a thoroughly selfish and altogether wilful person, but very much the reverse, it was not the fault of his parents, but rather the operation of a benignant nature that had bestowed on him a generous spirit and a tender heart, though accompanied with a dangerous suscepti-

bility that made him the child and creature of impulse, and seemed to set at defiance even the course of time to engraft on his nature any quality of prudence.

The tone of Eton in the days of Charles Egremont was not of the high character which at present distinguishes that community. It was the unforeseen eve of the great change, that, whatever was its purpose or have been its immediate results, at least gave the first shock to the pseudo-aristocracy of this country. Then all was blooming; sunshine and odour; not a breeze disturbing the meridian splendour. Then the world was not only made for a few, but a very few. One could almost tell upon one's fingers the happy families who could do anything, and might have everything. A schoolboy's ideas of the Church then were fat livings, and of the State rotten boroughs. To do nothing and get something formed a boy's ideal of a manly career. There was nothing in the lot, little in the temperament, of Charles Egremont, to make him an exception to the multitude. Gaily and securely he floated on the brilliant stream. Popular at school, idolised at home, the present had no cares, and the future secured him a family seat in Parliament the moment he entered life, and the inheritance of a glittering post at court in due time, as its legitimate consequence. Enjoyment, not ambition, seemed the principle of his existence. The contingency of a mitre, the certainty of rich preferment, would not reconcile him to the self-sacrifice which, to a certain degree, was required from a priest, even in those days of rampant Erastianism. He left the colonies as the spoil of his younger brothers; his own ideas of a profession being limited to a barrack in a London

park varied by visits to Windsor. But there was time enough to think of these things.

He enjoyed Oxford as he had Eton. Here his allowance from his father was extravagant, though greatly increased by tithes from his mother's pin-money. While he was pursuing his studies, hunting and boating, driving tandems, riding matches, tempering his energies in the crapulence of boyish banquets, and anticipating life, at the risk of expulsion, in a miserable mimicry of metropolitan dissipation, dukism, that was supposed to be eternal, suddenly crashed.

The Reform Act has not placed the administration of our affairs in abler hands than conducted them previously to the passing of the measure, for the most efficient members of the present cabinet, with some few exceptions, and those attended by peculiar circumstances, were ministers before the Reform Act was contemplated. Nor has that memorable statute created a Parliament of a higher reputation for public qualities, such as politic ability, and popular eloquence, and national consideration, than was furnished by the old scheme. On the contrary, one house of Parliament has been irremediably degraded into the decaying position of a mere court of registry, possessing great privileges, on condition that it never exercises them; while the other chamber, that, at the first blush, and to the superficial, exhibits symptoms of almost unnatural vitality, engrossing in its orbit all the business of the country, assumes on a more studious inspection somewhat of the character of a select vestry, fulfilling municipal rather than imperial offices, and beleaguered by critical and clamorous millions, who cannot comprehend why a privileged and exclusive senate is requisite to perform functions

which immediately concern all, which most personally comprehend, and which many in their civic spheres believe they could accomplish in a manner not less satisfactory, though certainly less ostentatious.

But if it have not furnished us with abler administrators or a more illustrious senate, the Reform Act may have exercised on the country at large a beneficial influence. Has it? Has it elevated the tone of the public mind? Has it cultured the popular sensibilities to noble and ennobling ends? Has it proposed to the people of England a higher test of national respect and confidence than the debasing qualification universally prevalent in this country since the fatal introduction of the system of Dutch finance? Who will pretend it? If a spirit of rapacious covetousness, desecrating all the humanities of life, has been the besetting sin of England for the last century and a half, since the passing of the Reform Act the altar of Mammon has blazed with triple worship. To acquire, to accumulate, to plunder each other by virtue of philosophic phrases, to propose a Utopia to consist only of WEALTH and TOIL, this has been the breathless business of enfranchised England for the last twelve years, until we are startled from our voracious strife by the wail of intolerable serfage.

Are we then to conclude that the only effect of the Reform Act has been to create in this country another of those class interests which we now so loudly accuse as the obstacles to general amelioration? Not exactly that. The indirect influence of the Reform Act has been not inconsiderable, and may eventually lead to vast consequences. It set men a-thinking; it enlarged the horizon of political experience; it led the public mind to ponder somewhat on the circumstances

of our national history; to pry into the beginnings of some social anomalies, which, they found, were not so ancient as they had been led to believe, and which had their origin in causes very different from what they had been educated to credit; and insensibly it created and prepared a popular intelligence to which one can appeal, no longer hopelessly, in an attempt to dispel the mysteries with which for nearly three centuries it has been the labour of party writers to involve a national history, and without the dispersion of which no political position can be understood and no social evil remedied.

The events of 1830 did not produce any change in the modes of thought and life of Charles Egremont. He took his political cue from his mother, who was his constant correspondent. Lady Marney was a distinguished 'stateswoman,' as they called Lady Carlisle in Charles I.'s time, a great friend of Lady St. Julians, and one of the most eminent and impassioned votaries of dukism. Her first impression on the overthrow of her hero was astonishment at the impertinence of his adversaries, mingled with some lofty pity for their silly ambition and short-lived career. She existed for a week in the delightful expectation of his Grace being sent for again, and informed every one in confidence, that 'these people could not form a cabinet.' When the tocsin of peace, reform, and retrenchment sounded, she smiled bitterly; was sorry for poor Lord Grey, of whom she had thought better, and gave them a year, adding, with consoling malice, 'that it would be another Canning affair.' At length came the Reform Bill itself, and no one laughed more heartily than Lady Marney; not even the House of Commons to whom it was presented.

The bill was thrown out, and Lady Marney gave a grand ball to celebrate the event, and to compensate the London shopkeepers for the loss of their projected franchise. Lady Marney was preparing to resume her duties at court, when, to her great surprise, the firing of cannon announced the dissolution of Parliament. She turned pale; she was too much in the secrets of Tadpole and Taper to be deceived as to the consequences; she sank into her chair, and denounced Lord Grey as a traitor to his order.

Lady Marney, who for six months had been writing to her son at Oxford the most charming letters, full of fun, quizzing the whole Cabinet, now announced to Egremont that a revolution was inevitable, that all property would be instantly confiscated, the poor deluded king led to the block or sent over to Hanover at the best, and the whole of the nobility and principal gentry, and every one who possessed anything, guillotined without remorse.

Whether his friends were immediately to resume power, or whether their estates ultimately were to be confiscated, the practical conclusion to Charles Egremont appeared to be the same. '*Carpe diem.*' He therefore pursued his career at Oxford unchanged, and entered life in the year 1833, a younger son with extravagant tastes and expensive habits, with a reputation for lively talents though uncultivated, for his acquisitions at Eton had been quite puerile, and subsequently he had not become a student,—with many manly accomplishments, and with a mien and visage that at once took the fancy and enlisted the affections. Indeed, a physiologist would hardly have inferred from the countenance and structure of Egremont the career he had pursued, or the character which attached to him.

The general cast and expression of his features when in repose was pensive; an air of refinement distinguished his well-moulded brow; his mouth breathed sympathy, and his rich brown eye gleamed with tenderness. The sweetness of his voice in speaking was in harmony with this organisation.

Two years passed in the most refined circles of our society exercised a beneficial influence on the general tone of Egremont, and may be said to have finished his education. He had the good sense and the good taste not to permit his predilection for sports to degenerate into slang; he yielded himself to the delicate and profitable authority of woman, and, as ever happens, it softened his manners and brightened his wit. He was fortunate in having a clever mother, and he appreciated this inestimable possession. Lady Marney had great knowledge of society, and some acquaintance with human nature, which she fancied she had fathomed to its centre; she piqued herself upon her tact, and indeed she was very quick, but she was so energetic that her art did not always conceal itself; very worldly, she was nevertheless not devoid of impulse; she was animated, and would have been extremely agreeable, if she had not restlessly aspired to wit; and would certainly have exercised much more influence in society if she had not been so anxious to show it. Nevertheless, still with many personal charms, a frank and yet, if need be, a finished manner, a quick brain, a lively tongue, a buoyant spirit, and a great social position, Lady Marney was universally and extremely popular; and adored by her children, for she was a mother most affectionate and true.

When Egremont was four-and-twenty, he fell in love; a real passion. He had fluttered like others

from flower to flower, and like others had often fancied the last perfume the sweetest, and then had flown away. But now he was entirely captivated. The divinity was a new beauty; the whole world raving of her. Egremont also advanced. The Lady Arabella was not only beautiful: she was clever, fascinating. Her presence was inspiration; at least for Egremont. She condescended to be pleased by him; she signalised him by her notice; their names were mentioned together. Egremont indulged in flattering dreams. He regretted he had not pursued a profession; he regretted he had impaired his slender patrimony: thought of love in a cottage, and renting a manor; thought of living a good deal with his mother, and a little with his brother; thought of the law and the church; thought once of New Zealand. The favourite of nature and of fashion, this was the first time in the life of Egremont that he had been made conscious that there was something in his position which, with all its superficial brilliancy, might prepare for him, when youth had fled and the blaze of society had grown dim, a drear and bitter lot.

He was roused from his reveries by a painful change in the demeanour of his adored. The mother of the Lady Arabella was alarmed. She liked her daughter to be admired even by younger sons, when they were distinguished, but only at a distance. Mr. Egremont's name had been mentioned too often. It had appeared coupled with her daughter's even in a Sunday paper. The most decisive measures were requisite, and they were taken. Still smiling when they met, still kind when they conversed, it seemed by some magic dexterity which even baffled Egremont, that their meetings every day grew rarer, and their op-

portunities for conversation less frequent. At the end of the season, the Lady Arabella selected from a crowd of admirers equally qualified, a young peer of great estate, and of the 'old nobility,' a circumstance which, as her grandfather had only been an East India director, was very gratifying to the bride.

This unfortunate passion of Charles Egremont, with its mortifying circumstances and consequences, was just that earliest shock in one's life which occurs to all of us; which first makes us think. We have all experienced that disheartening catastrophe when the illusions first vanish; and our baulked imagination, or our mortified vanity, first intimates to us that we are neither infallible nor irresistible. Happily 'tis the season of youth for which the first lessons of experience are destined; and, bitter and intolerable as is the first blight of our fresh feelings, the sanguine impulse of early life bears us along. Our first scrape generally leads to our first travel. Disappointment requires change of air; desperation, change of scene. Egremont quitted his country, never to return to it again; and returned to it after a year and a-half's absence a much wiser man. Having left England in a serious mood, and having already tasted with tolerable freedom of the pleasures and frivolities of life, he was not in an inapt humour to observe, to enquire, and to reflect. The new objects that surrounded him excited his intelligence; he met, which indeed is the principal advantage of travel, remarkable men, whose conversation opened his mind. His mind was worth opening. Energies began to stir of which he had not been conscious; awakened curiosity led him to investigate and to read; he discovered that, when he imagined his education was completed, it had in fact

not commenced; and that, although he had been at a public school and a university, he in fact knew nothing. To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge. Before an emancipated intellect and an expanding intelligence, the great system of exclusive manners and exclusive feelings in which he had been born and nurtured, began to tremble; the native generosity of his heart recoiled at a recurrence to that arrogant and frigid life, alike devoid of sympathy and real grandeur.

In the early spring of 1837, Egremont re-entered the world, where he had once sparkled, and which he had once conceived to comprise within its circle all that could interest or occupy man. His mother, delighted at finding him again under her roof, had removed some long-standing coolness between him and his elder brother; his former acquaintance greeted him with cordiality, and introduced him to the new heroes who had sprung up during the season of his absence. Apparently Egremont was not disinclined to pursue, though without eagerness, the same career that had originally engaged him. He frequented assemblies, and lingered in clubs; rode in the park, and lounged at the opera. But there was this difference in his existence before and since his travels: he was now conscious he wanted an object; and was ever musing over action, though as yet ignorant how to act. Perhaps it was this want of being roused that led him, it may be for distraction, again to the turf. It was a pursuit that seemed to him more real than the life of saloons, full of affectation, perverted ideas, and factitious passions. Whatever might be the impulse, Egremont however was certainly not slightly interested in the Derby; and, though by no means unin-

structed in the mysteries of the turf, had felt such confidence in his information, that, with his usual ardour, he had backed to a considerable amount the horse that ought to have won, but which nevertheless only ran second.

CHAPTER VI.

'Le Roi est Mort; Vive la Reine!'

NOTWITHSTANDING the confidence of Lady St. Julians and her unrivalled information, the health of the king did not improve: but still it was the hay fever, only the hay fever. An admission had been allowed to creep into the Court Circular, that 'his Majesty has been slightly indisposed within the last few days;' but then it was soon followed by a positive assurance, that his Majesty's favourite and long-matured resolution to give a state banquet to the knights of the four orders was immediately to be carried into effect. Lady St. Julians had the first information of this important circumstance; it confirmed her original conviction; she determined to go on with her quadrille. Egremont, with something interesting at stake himself, was staggered by this announcement, and by Lady St. Julians' unshaken faith. He consulted his mother. Lady Marney shook her head. 'Poor woman!' said Lady Marney, 'she is always wrong. I know,' continued her ladyship, placing her finger to her lip, 'that Prince Esterhazy has been pressing his long-postponed investiture as a Grand

Cross, in order that he may dine at this very banquet; and it has been announced to him that it is impossible, the king's health will not admit of it. When a simple investiture is impossible, a state banquet to the four orders is very probable. No,' said Lady Marney with a sigh; 'it is a great blow for all of us, but it is no use shutting our eyes to the fact. The poor dear king will never show again.'

And about a week after this there appeared the first bulletin. From that instant, though the gullish multitude studied the daily reports with grave interest, their hopes and speculations and arrangements changing with each phrase, for the initiated there was no suspense. All knew that it was over; and Lady St. Julians, giving up her quadrille, began to look about for seats in Parliament for her sons.

'What a happiness it is to have a clever mother!' exclaimed Egremont, as he pondered over the returns of his election agent. Lady Marney, duly warned of the impending catastrophe, was experiencing all the advantages of prior information. It delighted her to meet Lady St. Julians driving distractedly about town, calling at clubs, closeted with red-tapers, making ingenious combinations that would not work, by means of which some one of her sons was to stand in coalition with some rich parvenu; to pay none of the expenses and yet to come in first. And all this time, Lady Marney, serene and smiling, had the daily pleasure of assuring Lady St. Julians what a relief it was to her that Charles had fixed on his place. It had been arranged indeed these weeks past; 'but then, you know,' concluded Lady Marney in the sweetest voice and with a blandishing glance, 'I never did believe in that hay fever.'

In the meantime the impending event changed the whole aspect of the political world. The king dying before the new registration was the greatest blow to pseudo-Toryism since his Majesty, calling for a hackney coach, went down and dissolved Parliament in 1831. It was calculated by the Tadpoles and Tapers that a dissolution by Sir Robert, after the registration of 1837, would give him a clear majority, not too great a one, but large enough; a manageable majority; some five-and-twenty or thirty men, who with a probable peerage or two dangling in the distance, half-a-dozen positive baronetcies, the Customs for their constituents, and Court balls for their wives, might be induced to save the state. O England! glorious and ancient realm, the fortunes of thy polity are indeed strange! The wisdom of the Saxons, Norman valour, the statecraft of the Tudors, the national sympathies of the Stuarts, the spirit of the latter Guelphs struggling against their enslaved sovereignty, these are the high qualities that for a thousand years have secured thy national development. And now all thy memorial dynasties end in the huckstering rule of some thirty unknown and anonymous jobbers! The Thirty at Athens were at least tyrants. They were marked men. But the obscure majority, who, under our present constitution, are destined to govern England, are as secret as a Venetian conclave. Yet on their dark voices all depends. Would you promote or prevent some great measure that may affect the destinies of unborn millions, and the future character of the people: take, for example, a system of national education: the minister must apportion the plunder to the illiterate clan, the scum that floats on the surface of a party; or hold out the prospect of

honours, which are only honourable when in their transmission they impart and receive lustre; when they are the meed of public virtue and public services, and the distinction of worth and of genius. It is impossible that the system of the Thirty can long endure in an age of inquiry and agitated spirit like the present. Such a system may suit the balanced interests and the periodical and alternate command of rival oligarchical connections; but it can subsist only by the subordination of the Sovereign and the degradation of the multitude; and cannot accord with an age whose genius will soon confess that power and the people are both divine.

'He can't last ten days,' said a Whig secretary of the treasury with a triumphant glance at Mr. Taper as they met in Pall Mall; 'you're out for our lives.'

'Don't you make too sure for yourselves,' rejoined in despair the dismayed Taper. 'It does not follow that because we are out, that you are in.'

'How do you mean?'

'There is such a person as Lord Durham in the world,' said Mr. Taper very solemnly.

'Pish,' said the secretary.

'You may pish,' said Mr. Taper, 'but, if we have a Radical government, as I believe and hope, they will not be able to get up the steam as they did in '31; and what with Church and corn together, and the Queen Dowager, we may go to the country with as good a cry as some other persons.'

'I will back Melbourne against the field now,' said the secretary.

'Lord Durham dined at Kensington on Thursday,' said Taper, 'and not a Whig present.'

'Ay; Durham talks very fine at dinner,' said the secretary, 'but he has no real go in him. When there is a Prince of Wales, Lord Melbourne means to make Durham governor to the heir apparent, and that will keep him quiet.'

'What do you hear?' said Mr. Tadpole, joining them; 'I am told he has quite rallied.'

'Don't you flatter yourself,' said the secretary.

'Well, we shall hear what they say on the hustings,' said Tadpole, looking boldly.

'Who's afraid!' said the secretary. 'No, no, my dear fellow, you are dead beat; the stake is worth playing for, and don't suppose we are such flats as to lose the race for want of jockeying. Your humbugging registration will never do against a new reign. Our great men mean to shell out, I tell you; we have got Croucher; we will denounce the Carlton and corruption all over the kingdom; and if that won't do, we will swear till we are black in the face, that the King of Hanover is engaged in a plot to dethrone our young Queen:' and the triumphant secretary wished the worthy pair good morning.

'They certainly have a good cry,' said Taper, mournfully.

'After all, the registration might be better,' said Tadpole, 'but still it is a good one.'

The daily bulletins became more significant; the crisis was evidently at hand. A dissolution of Parliament at any time must occasion great excitement; combined with a new reign, it inflames the passions of every class of the community. Even the poor begin to hope; the old, wholesome superstition that the Sovereign can exercise power, still lingers; and the suffering multitude are fain to believe that its

remedial character may be about to be revealed in their instance. As for the aristocracy in a new reign, they are all in a flutter. A bewildering vision of coronets, stars, and ribbons; smiles, and places at Court, haunts their noontide speculations and their midnight dreams. Then we must not forget the numberless instances in which the coming event is deemed to supply the long-sought opportunity of distinction, or the long-dreaded cause of utter discomfiture; the hundreds, the thousands, who mean to get into Parliament, the units who dread getting out. What a crashing change from lounging in St. James' Street to sauntering on Boulogne pier; or, after dining at Brooks's and supping at Crockford's, to be saved from destruction by the friendly interposition that sends you in an official capacity to the marsupial sympathies of Sydney or Swan River!

Now is the time for the men to come forward who have claims; claims for spending their money, which nobody asked them to do, but which of course they only did for the sake of the party. They never wrote for their party, or spoke for their party, or gave their party any other vote than their own; but they urge their claims, to something; a commissionership of anything, or a consulship anywhere; if no place to be had, they are ready to take it out in dignities. They once looked to the privy council, but would now be content with an hereditary honour; if they can have neither, they will take a clerkship in the treasury for a younger son. Perhaps they may get that in time; at present they go away growling with a gaugership; or having with desperate dexterity at length contrived to transform a tidewaiter into a landwaiter. But there is nothing like asking, except refusing.

Hark! it tolls! All is over. The great bell of the metropolitan cathedral announces the death of the last son of George III. who probably will ever reign in England. He was a good man: with feelings and sympathies; deficient in culture rather than ability; with a sense of duty; and with something of the conception of what should be the character of an English monarch. Peace to his manes! We are summoned to a different scene.

In a palace in a garden, not in a haughty keep, proud with the fame but dark with the violence of ages; not in a regal pile, bright with the splendour, but soiled with the intrigues of courts and factions; in a palace in a garden, meet scene for youth, and innocence, and beauty, came a voice that told the maiden that she must ascend her throne!

The council of England is summoned for the first time within her bowers. There are assembled the prelates and captains and chief men of her realm; the priests of the religion that consoles, the heroes of the sword that has conquered, the votaries of the craft that has decided the fate of empires; men grey with thought, and fame, and age; who are the stewards of divine mysteries, who have toiled in secret cabinets, who have encountered in battle the hosts of Europe, who have struggled in the less merciful strife of aspiring senates; men too, some of them, lords of a thousand vassals and chief proprietors of provinces, yet not one of them whose heart does not at this moment tremble as he awaits the first presence of the maiden who must now ascend her throne.

A hum of half-suppressed conversation which would attempt to conceal the excitement, which some of the greatest of them have since acknowledged, fills that

brilliant assemblage; that sea of plumes, and glittering stars, and gorgeous dresses. Hush! the portals open; she comes; the silence is as deep as that of a noontide forest. Attended for a moment by her royal mother and the ladies of her court, who bow and then retire, VICTORIA ascends her throne; a girl, alone, and for the first time, amid an assemblage of men.

In a sweet and thrilling voice, and with a composed mien which indicates rather the absorbing sense of august duty than an absence of emotion, THE QUEEN announces her accession to the throne of her ancestors, and her humble hope that divine Providence will guard over the fulfilment of her lofty trust.

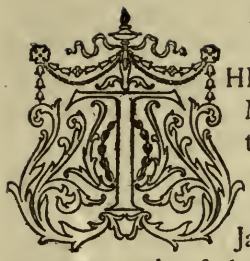
The prelates and captains and chief men of her realm then advance to the throne, and, kneeling before her, pledge their troth, and take the sacred oaths of allegiance and supremacy.

Allegiance to one who rules over the land that the great Macedonian could not conquer; and over a continent of which even Columbus never dreamed: to the Queen of every sea, and of nations in every zone.

It is not of these that I would speak; but of a nation nearer her footstool, and which at this moment looks to her with anxiety, with affection, perhaps with hope. Fair and serene, she has the blood and beauty of the Saxon. Will it be her proud destiny at length to bear relief to suffering millions, and, with that soft hand, which might inspire troubadours and guerdon knights, break the last links in the chain of Saxon thraldom?

CHAPTER VII.

Marney Abbey.



HE building which was still called Marney Abbey, though remote from the site of the ancient monastery, was an extensive structure raised at the latter end of the reign of James I., and in the stately and picturesque style of that age. Placed on a noble elevation in the centre of an extensive and well-wooded park, it presented a front with two projecting wings of equal dimensions with the centre, so that the form of the building was that of a quadrangle, less one of its sides. Its ancient lattices had been removed, and the present windows, though convenient, accorded little with the structure; the old entrance door in the centre of the building, however, still remained, a wondrous specimen of fantastic carving: Ionic columns of black oak, with a profusion of fruits and flowers, and heads of stags and sylvans. The whole of the building was crowned with a considerable pediment of what seemed at the first glance fanciful open-work, but which, examined more nearly, offered in gigantic letters the motto of the house of Marney. The portal opened to a hall such as is now rarely found; with the dais,

the screen, the gallery, and the buttery-hatch all perfect, and all of carved black oak. Modern luxury, and the refined taste of the lady of the late lord, had made Marney Abbey as remarkable for its comfort and pleasantness of accommodation as for its ancient state and splendour. The apartments were in general furnished with all the cheerful ease and brilliancy of the modern mansion of a noble, but the grand gallery of the seventeenth century was still preserved, and was used on great occasions as the chief reception-room. You ascended the principal staircase to reach it through a long corridor. It occupied the whole length of one of the wings; was one hundred feet long, and forty-five feet broad, its walls hung with a collection of choice pictures rich in history; while the Axminster carpets, the cabinets, carved tables, and variety of easy chairs, ingeniously grouped, imparted even to this palatian chamber a lively and habitable air.

Lord Marney was several years the senior of Charles Egremont, yet still a young man. He was handsome; there was indeed a general resemblance between the brothers, though the expression of their countenances was entirely different; of the same height and air, and throughout the features a certain family cast: but here the likeness ceased. The countenance of Lord Marney bespoke the character of his mind; cynical, devoid of sentiment, arrogant, literal, hard. He had no imagination, had exhausted his slight native feeling; but he was acute, disputatious, and firm even to obstinacy. Though his early education had been imperfect, he had subsequently read a good deal, especially in French literature. He had formed his mind by Helvetius, whose system he deemed irrefutable, and in whom alone he had faith. Armed with the principles

of his great master, he believed he could pass through existence in adamantine armour, and always gave you in the business of life the idea of a man who was conscious you were trying to take him in, and rather respected you for it, but the working of whose cold unkind eye defied you.

There never had been excessive cordiality between the brothers even in their boyish days, and shortly after Egremont's entrance into life they had become estranged. They were to meet now for the first time since Egremont's return from the continent. Their mother had arranged their reconciliation. They were to meet as if no misunderstanding had ever existed between them; it was specially stipulated by Lord Marney that there was to be no 'scene.' Apprised of Egremont's impending arrival, Lord Marney was careful to be detained late that day at petty sessions, and entered the room only a few minutes before dinner was announced, where he found Egremont not only with the countess and a young lady who was staying with her, but with additional bail against any ebullition of sentiment in the shape of the vicar of Marney, and a certain Captain Grouse, who was a kind of aide-de-camp of the earl; killed birds and carved them; played billiards with him and lost; had, indeed, every accomplishment that could please woman or ease man; could sing, dance, draw, make artificial flies, break horses, exercise a supervision over stewards and bailiffs, and make everybody comfortable by taking everything on his own shoulders.

Lady Marney had received Egremont in a manner which expressed the extreme satisfaction she experienced at finding him once more beneath his brother's roof. When he arrived, indeed, he would have pre-

ferred to have been shown at once to his rooms, but a message immediately delivered expressed the wish of his sister-in-law at once to see him. She received him alone and with great warmth. She was beautiful and soft as May; a glowing yet delicate face; rich brown hair, and large blue eyes; not yet a mother, but with something of the dignity of the matron blending with the lingering timidity of the girl.

Egremont was glad to join his sister-in-law again in the drawing-room before dinner. He seated himself by her side, and in answer to her enquiries was giving her some narrative of his travels; the vicar, who was Low Church, was shaking his head at Lady Marney's young friend, who was enlarging on the excellence of Mr. Paget's tales; while Captain Grouse, in a stiff white neckcloth, tight pantaloons to show his celebrated legs, transparent stockings and polished shoes, was throwing himself into attitudes in the background, and, with a zeal amounting almost to enthusiasm, teaching Lady Marney's spaniel to beg, when the door opened and Lord Marney entered, but, as if to make security doubly sure, not alone. He was accompanied by a neighbour and brother magistrate, Sir Vavasour Firebrace, a baronet of the earliest batch, and a gentleman of great family and great estate.

'Well, Charles!'

'How are you, George?'

And the brothers shook hands.

'Tis the English way; and if they had been inclined to fall into each other's arms, they would not probably have done more.

In a few minutes it was announced that dinner was served, and so, secured from a scene, having a fair

appetite, and surrounded by dishes that could agreeably satisfy it, a kind of vague fraternal sentiment began to stir the breast of Lord Marney: he really was glad to see his brother again; remembered the days when they rode their ponies and played cricket; his voice softened, his eyes sparkled, and he at length exclaimed, 'Do you know, old fellow, it makes me quite happy to see you here again? Suppose we take a glass of wine.'

The softer heart and more susceptible spirit of Egremont were well calculated to respond to this ebullition of feeling, however slight; and truly it was for many reasons not without considerable emotion, that he found himself once more at Marney. He sat by the side of his gentle sister-in-law, who seemed pleased by the unwonted cordiality of her husband, and anxious by many kind offices to second every indication of good feeling on his part. Captain Grouse was assiduous; the vicar was of the differential breed, agreed with Lady Marney on the importance of infant schools, but recalled his opinion when Lord Marney expressed his imperious hope that no infant schools would ever be found in his neighbourhood. Sir Vavasour was more than middle-aged, comely, very gentlemanlike, but with an air occasionally of absence which hardly agreed with his frank and somewhat hearty idiosyncrasy, his clear brow, florid complexion, and blue eye. But Lord Marney talked a good deal, though chiefly dogmatical or argumentative. It was rather difficult for him to find a sufficient stock of opposition, but he lay in wait and seized every opening with wonderful alacrity. Even Captain Grouse could not escape him: if driven to extremity, Lord Marney would even question his principles on fly-making.

Captain Grouse gave up, but not too soon; he was well aware that his noble friend's passion for controversy was equal to his love of conquest. As for Lady Marney, it was evident that, with no inconsiderable talents, and with an intelligence richly cultivated, the controversial genius of her husband had completely cowed her conversational charms. She never advanced a proposition that he did not immediately bristle up, and she could only evade the encounter by a graceful submission. As for the vicar, a frequent guest, he would fain have taken refuge in silence, but the earl, especially when alone, would what he called 'draw him out,' and the game once unearthed, with so skilled a pack there was but little fear of a bad run. When all were reduced to silence, Lord Marney, relinquishing controversy, assumed the positive. He eulogised the new Poor-Law, which he declared would be the salvation of the country, provided it was 'carried out' in the spirit in which it was developed in the Marney Union; but then he would add that there was no district except their union in which it was properly observed. He was tremendously fierce against allotments, and analysed the system with merciless sarcasm. Indeed, he had no inconsiderable acquaintance with the doctrines of the economists, and was rather inclined to carry them into practice in every instance, except that of the landed proprietary, which he clearly proved 'stood upon different grounds' from those of any other 'interest.' There was nothing he hated so much as a poacher, except a lease; though perhaps, in the catalogue of his aversions, we ought to give the preference to his anti-ecclesiastical prejudice; this amounted even to acrimony. Though there was no man breathing who was possessed with such

a strong repugnance to subscriptions of any kind, it delighted Lord Marney to see his name among the contributors to all sectarian institutions. The vicar of Marney, who had been presented by himself, was his model of a priest: he left everybody alone. Under the influence of Lady Marney, the worthy vicar had once warmed up into some ebullition of very Low Church zeal; there was some talk of an evening lecture, the schools were to be remodelled, certain tracts were actually distributed. But Lord Marney soon stopped all this. 'No priestcraft at Marney,' said this gentle proprietor of abbey lands.

'I wanted very much to come and canvass for you,' said Lady Marney to Egremont, 'but George did not like it.'

'The less the family interfered the better,' said Lord Marney; 'and for my part, I was very much alarmed when I heard my mother had gone down.'

'Oh! my mother did wonders,' said Egremont; 'we should have been beaten without her. Indeed, to tell the truth, I quite gave up the thing the moment they started their man. Before that we were on velvet; but the instant he appeared everything was changed, and I found some of my warmest supporters members of his committee.'

'You had a formidable opponent, Lord Marney told me,' said Sir Vavasour. 'Who was he?'

'Oh! a dreadful man! A Scotchman, richer than Crœsus, one McDruggy, fresh from Canton, with a million of opium in each pocket, denouncing corruption and bellowing free trade.'

'But they do not care much for free trade in the old borough?' said Lord Marney.

'No, it was a mistake,' said Egremont; 'and the

cry was changed the moment my opponent was on the ground. Then all the town was placarded with "Vote for McDruggy and our young Queen," as if he had coalesced with her Majesty.'

'My mother must have been in despair,' said Lord Marney.

'We issued our placard instantly of "Vote for our young Queen and Egremont," which was at least more modest, and turned out more popular.'

'That I am sure was my mother,' said Lord Marney.

'No,' said Egremont; 'it was the effusion of a far more experienced mind. My mother was in hourly communication with head-quarters, and Mr. Taper sent down the cry by express.'

'Peel, in or out, will support the Poor-Law,' said Lord Marney, rather audaciously, as he reseated himself after the ladies had retired. 'He must;' and he looked at his brother, whose return had in a great degree been secured by crying that Poor-Law down.

'It is impossible,' said Charles, fresh from the hustings, and speaking from the card of Taper; for the condition of the people was a subject of which he knew nothing.

'He will carry it out,' said Lord Marney, 'you'll see, or the land will not support him.'

'I wish,' said Sir Vavasour, 'we could manage some modification about out-door relief.'

'Modification!' said Lord Marney; 'why, there has been nothing but modification. What we want is stringency.'

'The people will never bear it,' said Egremont; 'there must be some change.'

'You cannot go back to the abuses of the old system,' said Captain Grouse, making, as he thought, a safe observation.

'Better go back to the old system than modify the new,' said Lord Marney.

'I wish the people would take to it a little more,' said Sir Vavasour; 'they certainly do not like it in our parish.'

'The people are very contented here, eh, Slimsey?' said Lord Marney.

'Very,' said the vicar.

Hereupon a conversation took place, principally sustained by the earl and the baronet, which developed all the resources of the great parochial mind. Dietaries, bastardy, gaol regulations, game laws, were amply discussed; and Lord Marney wound up with a declaration of the means by which the country might be saved, and which seemed principally to consist of high prices and Low Church.

'If the Sovereign could only know her best friends,' said Sir Vavasour, with a sigh.

Lord Marney seemed to get uneasy.

'And avoid the fatal mistakes of her predecessor,' continued the baronet.

'Charles, another glass of claret,' said the earl.

'She might yet rally round the throne a body of men—'

'Then we will go to the ladies,' said the earl, abruptly disturbing his guest.

CHAPTER VIII.

'The Question of the Day.'

'HERE was music as they re-entered the drawing-room. Sir Vavasour attached himself to Egremont.

'It is a great pleasure for me to see you again, Mr. Egremont,' said the worthy baronet. 'Your father was my earliest and kindest friend. I remember you at Firebrace, a very little boy. Happy to see you again, sir, in so eminent a position; a legislator—one of our legislators. It gave me a sincere satisfaction to observe your return.'

'You are very kind, Sir Vavasour.'

'But it is a responsible position,' continued the baronet. 'Think you they'll stand? A majority, I suppose, they have; but, I conclude, in time, Sir Robert will have it in time. We must not be in a hurry; "the more haste"—you know the rest. The country is decidedly conservative. All that we want now is a strong government, that will put all things to rights. If the poor king had lived—'

'He would have sent these men to the right-about,' said Egremont, a young politician, proud of his secret intelligence.

'Ah! the poor king!' said Sir Vavasour, shaking his head.

'He was entirely with us,' said Egremont.

'Poor man!' said Sir Vavasour.

'You think it was too late, then?' said his companion.

'You are a young man entering political life,' said the baronet, taking Egremont kindly by the arm, and leading him to a sofa; 'everything depends on the first step. You have a great opportunity. Nothing can be done by a mere individual. The most powerful body in this country wants a champion.'

'But you can depend on Peel?' said Egremont.

'He is one of us; we ought to be able to depend on him. But I have spoken to him for an hour, and could get nothing out of him.'

'He is cautious; but depend upon it, he will stand or fall by the land.'

'I am not thinking of the land,' said Sir Vavasour; 'of something much more important; with all the influence of the land, and a great deal more besides; of an order of men who are ready to rally round the throne, and are, indeed, if justice were done to them, its natural and hereditary champions.' Egremont looked perplexity. 'I am speaking,' added Sir Vavasour in a solemn voice, 'I am speaking of the baronets!'

'The baronets! And what do they want?'

'Their rights; their long-withheld rights. The poor king was with us. He has frequently expressed to me and other deputies his determination to do us justice; but he was not a strong-minded man,' said Sir Vavasour, with a sigh; 'and in these revolutionary and levelling times he had a hard task, perhaps. And

the peers, who are our brethren, they were, I fear, against us. But, in spite of the ministers and in spite of the peers, had the poor king lived we should at least have had the badge,' added Sir Vavasour, mournfully.

'The badge!'

'It would have satisfied Sir Grosvenor le Draughte,' said Sir Vavasour; 'and he had a strong party with him; he was for compromise, but d—— him, his father was only an accoucheur.'

'And you wanted more?' inquired Egremont, with a demure look.

'All, or nothing,' said Sir Vavasour; 'principle is ever my motto, no expediency. I made a speech to the order at the Clarendon; there were four hundred of us; the feeling was very strong.'

'A powerful party,' said Egremont.

'And a military order, sir, if properly understood. What could stand against us? The Reform Bill could never have passed if the baronets had been organised.'

'I have no doubt you could bring us in now,' said Egremont.

'That is exactly what I told Sir Robert. I want him to be brought in by his own order. It would be a grand thing.'

'There is nothing like *esprit de corps*,' said Egremont.

'And such a body!' exclaimed Sir Vavasour, with animation. 'Picture us for a moment, to yourself, going down in procession to Westminster, for example, to hold a chapter. Five or six hundred baronets in dark green costume,—the appropriate dress of *equites aurati;* each not only with his badge, but with

his collar of SS.; belted and scarfed; his star glittering; his pennon flying; his hat white, with a plume of white feathers; of course the sword and the gilt spurs. In our hand, the thumb-ring and signet not forgotten, we hold our coronet of two balls!'

Egremont stared with irrepressible astonishment at the excited being, who unconsciously pressed his companion's arm as he drew this rapid sketch of the glories so unconstitutionally withheld from him.

'A magnificent spectacle!' said Egremont.

'Evidently the body destined to save this country,' eagerly continued Sir Vavasour. 'Blending all sympathies; the crown of which they are the peculiar champions; the nobles of whom they are the popular branch; the people who recognise in them their natural leaders. But the picture is not complete. We should be accompanied by an equal number of gallant knights, our eldest sons, who, the moment they come of age, have the right to claim knighthood of their Sovereign, while their mothers and wives, no longer degraded to the nomenclature of a sheriff's lady, but resuming their legal or analogical dignities, and styled the "honourable baronetess," with her coronet and robe, or the "honourable knightess," with her golden collar of SS., and chaplet or cap of dignity, may either accompany the procession, or, ranged in galleries in a becoming situation, rain influence from above.'

'I am all for their going in the procession,' said Egremont.

'The point is not so clear,' said Sir Vavasour, solemnly; 'and indeed, although we have been firm in defining our rightful claims in our petitions, as for "honorary epithets, secondary titles, personal decora-

tions, and augmented heraldic bearings," I am not clear, if the government evinced a disposition for a liberal settlement of the question, I would not urge a too stringent adherence to every point. For instance, I am prepared myself, great as would be the sacrifice, even to renounce the claim of secondary titles for our eldest sons, if, for instance, they would secure us our coronet.'

'Fie, fie, Sir Vavasour,' said Egremont, seriously; 'remember principle: no expediency, no compromise.'

'You are right,' said the baronet, colouring a little; 'and do you know, Mr. Egremont, you are the only individual I have yet met out of the order, who has taken a sensible view of this great question, which, after all, is the question of the day.'

CHAPTER IX.

A Significant Event.

THE situation of the rural town of Marney was one of the most delightful easily to be imagined. In a spreading dale, contiguous to the margin of a clear and lively stream, surrounded by meadows and gardens, and backed by lofty hills, undulating and richly wooded, the traveller on the opposite heights of the dale would often stop to admire the merry prospect that recalled to him the traditional epithet of his country.

Beautiful illusion! For behind that laughing landscape, penury and disease fed upon the vitals of a miserable population.

The contrast between the interior of the town and its external aspect was as striking as it was full of pain. With the exception of the dull high street, which had the usual characteristics of a small agricultural market town, some sombre mansions, a dingy inn, and a petty bourse, Marney mainly consisted of a variety of narrow and crowded lanes formed by cottages built of rubble, or unhewn stones without cement, and, from age or badness of the material,

looking as if they could scarcely hold together. The gaping chinks admitted every blast; the leaning chimneys had lost half their original height; the rotten rafters were evidently misplaced; while in many instances the thatch, yawning in some parts to admit the wind and wet, and in all utterly unfit for its original purpose of giving protection from the weather, looked more like the top of a dunghill than a cottage. Before the doors of these dwellings, and often surrounding them, ran open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease, or sometimes in their imperfect course filling foul pits or spreading into stagnant pools, while a concentrated solution of every species of dissolving filth was allowed to soak through, and thoroughly impregnate, the walls and ground adjoining.

These wretched tenements seldom consisted of more than two rooms, in one of which the whole family, however numerous, were obliged to sleep, without distinction of age, or sex, or suffering. With the water streaming down the walls, the light distinguished through the roof, with no hearth even in winter, the virtuous mother in the sacred pangs of childbirth gives forth another victim to our thoughtless civilisation; surrounded by three generations whose inevitable presence is more painful than her sufferings in that hour of travail; while the father of her coming child, in another corner of the sordid chamber, lies stricken by that typhus which his contaminating dwelling has breathed into his veins, and for whose next prey is perhaps destined his new-born child. These swarming walls had neither windows nor doors sufficient to keep out the weather, or admit the sun, or supply the means of ventilation; the humid and putrid

roof of thatch exhaling malaria like all other decaying vegetable matter. The dwelling-rooms were neither boarded nor paved; and whether it were that some were situate in low and damp places, occasionally flooded by the river, and usually much below the level of the road; or that the springs, as was often the case, would burst through the mud floor, the ground was at no time better than so much clay, while sometimes you might see little channels cut from the centre under the doorways to carry off the water, the door itself removed from its hinges; a resting-place for infancy in its deluged home. These hovels were in many instances not provided with the commonest conveniences of the rudest police; contiguous to every door might be observed the dung-heap on which every kind of filth was accumulated, for the purpose of being disposed of for manure, so that, when the poor man opened his narrow habitation in the hope of refreshing it with the breeze of summer, he was met with a mixture of gases from reeking dunghills.

This town of Marney was a metropolis of agricultural labour, for the proprietors of the neighbourhood having for the last half-century acted on the system of destroying the cottages on their estates, in order to become exempted from the maintenance of the population, the expelled people had flocked to Marney, where, during the war, a manufactory had afforded them some relief, though its wheels had long ceased to disturb the waters of the Mar.

Deprived of this resource, they had again gradually spread themselves over that land which had, as it were, rejected them; and obtained from its churlish breast a niggardly subsistence. Their re-entrance into the surrounding parishes was viewed with great suspi-

cion; their renewed settlement opposed by every ingenious contrivance. Those who availed themselves of their labour were careful that they should not become dwellers on the soil; and though, from the excessive competition, there were few districts in the kingdom where the rate of wages was more depressed, those who were fortunate enough to obtain the scant remuneration had, in addition to their toil, to endure, each morn and even, a weary journey before they could reach the scene of their labour, or return to the squalid hovel which profaned the name of home. To that home, over which malaria hovered, and round whose shivering hearth were clustered other guests besides the exhausted family of toil, Fever, in every form, pale Consumption, exhausting Synochus, and trembling Ague, returned, after cultivating the broad fields of merry England, the bold British peasant, returned to encounter the worst of diseases, with a frame the least qualified to oppose them; a frame that, subdued by toil, was never sustained by animal food; drenched by the tempest, could not change its dripping rags; and was indebted for its scanty fuel to the windfalls of the woods.

The eyes of this unhappy race might have been raised to the solitary spire that sprang up in the midst of them, the bearer of present consolation, the harbinger of future equality; but Holy Church at Marney had forgotten her sacred mission. We have introduced the reader to the vicar, an orderly man, who deemed he did his duty if he preached each week two sermons, and enforced humility on his congregation, and gratitude for the blessings of this life. The high street and some neighbouring gentry were the staple of his hearers. Lord and Lady Marney, at-

tended by Captain Grouse, came every Sunday morning, with commendable regularity, and were ushered into the invisible interior of a vast pew, that occupied half of the gallery, was lined with crimson damask, and furnished with easy chairs, and, for those who chose them, well-padded stools of prayer. The people of Marney took refuge in conventicles, which abounded; little plain buildings of pale brick, with the names painted on them of Sion, Bethel, Bethesda; names of a distant land, and the language of a persecuted and ancient race; yet, such is the mysterious power of their divine quality, breathing consolation in the nineteenth century to the harassed forms and the harrowed souls of a Saxon peasantry.

But however devoted to his flock might have been the Vicar of Marney, his exertions for their well-being, under any circumstances, must have been mainly limited to spiritual consolation. Married, and a father, he received for his labours the small tithes of the parish, which secured to him an income by no means equal to that of a superior banker's clerk, or the cook of a great loanmonger. The great tithes of Marney, which might be counted by thousands, swelled the vast rental which was drawn from this district by the fortunate earls that bore its name.

The morning after the arrival of Egremont at the Abbey, an unusual stir might have been observed in the high street of the town. Round the portico of the Green Dragon hotel and commercial inn, a knot of principal personages, the chief lawyer, the brewer, the vicar himself, and several of those easy quidnuncs who abound in country towns, and who rank under the designation of retired gentlemen, were in close and earnest converse. In a short time, a servant on

horseback, in the Abbey livery, galloped up to the portico, and delivered a letter to the vicar. The excitement apparently had now greatly increased. On the opposite side of the way to the important group, a knot, in larger numbers, but deficient in quality, had formed themselves, and remained transfixed with gaping mouths and a curious, not to say alarmed air. The head constable walked up to the door of the Green Dragon, and, though he did not presume to join the principal group, was evidently in attendance, if required. The clock struck eleven; a cart had stopped to watch events, and a gentleman's coachman riding home with a led horse.

'Here they are!' said the brewer.

'Lord Marney himself,' said the lawyer.

'And Sir Vavasour Firebrace, I declare! I wonder how he came here,' said a retired gentleman, who had been a tallow-chandler on Holborn Hill.

The vicar took off his hat, and all uncovered. Lord Marney and his brother magistrate rode briskly up to the inn, and rapidly dismounted.

'Well, Snigford,' said his lordship, in a peremptory tone, 'this is a pretty business; I'll have this stopped directly.'

Fortunate man, if he succeeded in doing so! The torch of the incendiary had for the first time been introduced into the parish of Marney; and last night the primest stacks of the Abbey farm had blazed, a beacon to the agitated neighbourhood.

CHAPTER X.

A Stroll through the Abbey.

'IT IS not so much the fire, sir,' said Mr. Bingley, of the Abbey farm, to Egremont, 'but the temper of the people that alarms me. Do you know, sir, there were two or three score of them here, and, except my own farm-servants, not one of them would lend a helping hand to put out the flames, though, with water so near, they might have been of great service.'

'You told my brother, Lord Marney, this?'

'Oh! it's Mr. Charles I'm speaking to! My service to you, sir; I'm glad to see you in these parts again. It's a long time that we have had that pleasure, sir. Travelling in foreign parts, as I have heard say?'

'Something of that; but very glad to find myself at home once more, Mr. Bingley, though very sorry to have such a welcome as a blazing rick at the Abbey farm.'

'Well, do you know, Mr. Charles, between ourselves,' and Mr. Bingley lowered his tone and looked around him, 'things is very bad here; I can't make out, for my part, what has become of the country.

'Tayn't the same land to live in as it was when you used to come to our moor coursing, with the old lord; you remember that, I be sure, Mr. Charles?'

''Tis not easy to forget good sport, Mr. Bingley. With your permission, I will put my horse up here for half an hour. I have a fancy to stroll to the ruins.'

'You wunna find them much changed,' said the farmer, smiling. 'They have seen a deal of different things in their time! But you will taste our ale, Mr. Charles?'

'When I return.'

But the hospitable Bingley would take no denial, and as his companion waived on the present occasion entering his house, for the sun had been some time declining, the farmer, calling one of his labourers to take Egremont's horse, hastened into the house to fill the brimming cup.

'And what do you think of this fire?' said Egremont to the hind.

'I think 'tis hard times for the poor, sir.'

'But rick-burning will not make the times easier, my good man.'

The man made no reply, but with a dogged look led away the horse to the stable.

About half a mile from Marney the dale narrowed, and the river took a winding course. It ran through meads, soft and vivid with luxuriant vegetation, bounded on either side by rich hanging woods, save where occasionally a quarry broke the verdant bosom of the heights with its rugged and tawny form. Fair stone and plenteous timber, and the current of fresh waters, combined, with the silent and secluded scene screened from every harsh and angry wind, to form the sacred spot that in old days Holy Church loved

to hallow with its beauteous and enduring structures. Even the stranger, therefore, when he had left the town about two miles behind him, and had heard the farm and mill which he had since past called the Abbey farm and the Abbey mill, might have been prepared for the grateful vision of some monastic remains. As for Egremont, he had been almost born amid the ruins of Marney Abbey; its solemn relics were associated with his first and freshest fancies; every footstep was as familiar to him as it could have been to one of the old monks; yet never without emotion could he behold these unrivalled remains of one of the greatest of the great religious houses of the North.

Over a space of not less than ten acres might still be observed the fragments of the great Abbey: these were, towards their limit, in general moss-grown and mouldering memorials that told where once rose the offices, and spread the terraced gardens, of the old proprietors; here might still be traced the dwelling of the lord abbot; and there, still more distinctly, because built on a greater scale and of materials still more intended for perpetuity, the capacious hospital, a name that did not then denote the dwelling of disease, but a place where all the rights of hospitality were practised; where the traveller, from the proud baron to the lonely pilgrim, asked the shelter and the succour that never were denied, and at whose gate, called the Portal of the Poor, the peasants on the Abbey lands, if in want, might appeal each morn and night for raiment and for food.

But it was in the centre of this tract of ruins, occupying a space of not less than two acres, that, with a strength which had defied time, and with a beauty which had at last turned away the wrath of

man, still rose, if not in perfect, yet admirable, form and state, one of the noblest achievements of Christian art, the Abbey church. The summer vault was now its only roof, and all that remained of its gorgeous windows was the vastness of their arched symmetry, and some wreathed relics of their fantastic framework, but the rest was uninjured.

From the west window, looking over the transept chapel of the Virgin, still adorned with pillars of marble and alabaster, the eye wandered down the nave to the great orient light, a length of nearly three hundred feet, through a gorgeous avenue of unshaken walls and columns that clustered to the skies. On each side of the Lady's chapel rose a tower. One, which was of great antiquity, being of that style which is commonly called Norman, short, and thick, and square, did not mount much above the height of the western front; but the other tower was of a character very different. It was tall and light, and of a Gothic style most pure and graceful; the stone of which it was built, of a bright and even sparkling colour, and looking as if it were hewn but yesterday. At first, its turreted crest seemed injured; but the truth is, it was unfinished; the workmen were busied on this very tower the day that old Baldwin Greymount came as the king's commissioner to enquire into the conduct of this religious house. The abbots loved to memorise their reigns by some public work, which should add to the beauty of their buildings or the convenience of their subjects; and the last of the ecclesiastical lords of Marney, a man of fine taste, and a skilful architect, was raising his new belfry for his brethren, when the stern decree arrived that the bells should no more sound. And the hymn was no more

to be chaunted in the Lady's chapel; and the candles were no more to be lit on the high altar; and the gate of the poor was to be closed for ever; and the wanderer was no more to find a home.

The body of the church was in many parts overgrown with brambles, and in all covered with a rank vegetation. It had been a sultry day, and the blaze of the meridian heat still inflamed the air; the kine, for shelter rather than for sustenance, had wandered through some broken arches, and were lying in the shadow of the nave. This desecration of a spot once sacred, still beautiful and solemn, jarred on the feelings of Egremont. He sighed, and turning away, followed a path that after a few paces led him into the cloister garden. This was a considerable quadrangle, once surrounding the garden of the monks; but all that remained of that fair pleasaunce was a solitary yew in its centre, which seemed the oldest tree that could well live, and was, according to tradition, more ancient than the most venerable walls of the Abbey. Round this quadrangle were the refectory, the library, and the kitchen, and above them the cells and dormitory of the brethren. An imperfect staircase, not without danger, led to these unroofed chambers; but Egremont, familiar with the way, did not hesitate to pursue it, so that he soon found himself on an elevation overlooking the garden, while further on extended the vast cloisters of the monks, and adjoining was a cemetery, that had once been enclosed, and communicated with the cloister garden.

It was one of those summer days that are so still, that they seem as it were a holiday of Nature. The weary winds were sleeping in some grateful cavern, and the sunbeams basking on some fervent knoll; the

river floated with a drowsy unconscious course; there was no wave in the grass, no stir in the branches.

A silence so profound amid these solemn ruins offered the perfection of solitude; and there was that stirring in the mind of Egremont which rendered him far from indisposed for this loneliness.

The slight words that he had exchanged with the farmer and the hind had left him musing. Why was England not the same land as in the days of his light-hearted youth? Why were these hard times for the poor? He stood among the ruins that, as the farmer had well observed, had seen many changes: changes of creeds, of dynasties, of laws, of manners. New orders of men had arisen in the country, new sources of wealth had opened, new dispositions of power to which that wealth had necessarily led. His own house, his own order, had established themselves on the ruins of that great body, the emblems of whose ancient magnificence and strength surrounded him. And now his order was in turn menaced. And the People, the millions of Toil on whose unconscious energies during these changeful centuries all rested, what changes had these centuries brought to them? Had their advance in the national scale borne a due relation to that progress of their rulers, which had accumulated in the treasuries of a limited class the riches of the world, and made their possessors boast that they were the first of nations; the most powerful and the most free, the most enlightened, the most moral, and the most religious? Were there any rick-burners in the times of the lord abbots? And if not, why not? And why should the stacks of the Earls of Marney be destroyed, and those of the abbots of Marney spared?

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FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY FRANCIS VAUX WILSON

Looking around, he observed in the cemetery two men. One was standing beside a tomb.

(See page 85.)

Brooding over these suggestions, some voices disturbed him, and, looking round, he observed in the cemetery two men: one was standing beside a tomb, which his companion was apparently examining.

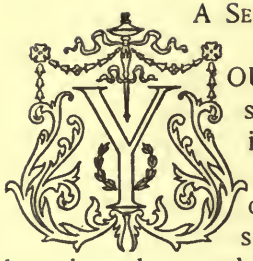
The first was of lofty stature, and, though dressed with simplicity, had nothing sordid in his appearance. His garments gave no clue to his position in life: they might have been worn by a squire or by his gamekeeper; a dark velveteen dress and leathern gaiters. As Egremont caught his form, he threw his broad-brimmed country hat upon the ground, and showed a frank and manly countenance. His complexion might in youth have been ruddy, but time and time's attendants, thought and passion, had paled it; his chestnut hair, faded, but not grey, still clustered over a noble brow; his features were regular and handsome, a well-formed nose, the square mouth and its white teeth, and the clear grey eye which befitted such an idiosyncrasy. His time of vigorous manhood, for he was nearer forty than fifty years of age, perhaps better suited his athletic form than the more supple and graceful season of youth.

Stretching his powerful arms in the air, and delivering himself of an exclamation which denoted his weariness, and which had broken the silence, he expressed to his companion his determination to rest himself under the shade of the yew in the contiguous garden, and, inviting his friend to follow him, he took up his hat and moved away.

There was something in the appearance of the stranger that interested Egremont; and, waiting till he had established himself in his pleasant resting-place, Egremont descended into the cloister garden and determined to address him. .

CHAPTER XI.

A Seraphic Appearance.



OU lean against an ancient trunk,' said Egremont, carelessly advancing to the stranger, who looked up at him without any expression of surprise, and then replied, 'They say 'tis the trunk beneath whose branches the monks encamped when they came to this valley to raise their building. It was their house, till with the wood and stone around them, their labour and their fine art, they piled up their abbey. And then they were driven out of it, and it came to this. Poor men! poor men!'

'They would hardly have forfeited their resting-place had they deserved to retain it,' said Egremont.

'They were rich. I thought it was poverty that was a crime,' replied the stranger, in a tone of simplicity.

'But they had committed other crimes.'

'It may be so; we are very frail. But their history has been written by their enemies; they were condemned without a hearing; the people rose oftentimes in their behalf; and their property was divided among those on whose reports it was forfeited.'

'At any rate, it was a forfeiture which gave life to the community,' said Egremont; 'the lands are held by active men and not by drones.'

'A drone is one who does not labour,' said the stranger; 'whether he wear a cowl or a coronet, 'tis the same to me. Somebody, I suppose, must own the land; though I have heard say that this individual tenure is not a necessity; but, however this may be, I am not one who would object to the lord, provided he were a gentle one. All agree that the monastics were easy landlords; their rents were low; they granted leases in those days. Their tenants, too, might renew their term before their tenure ran out: so they were men of spirit and property. There were yeomen then, sir: the country was not divided into two classes, masters and slaves; there was some resting-place between luxury and misery. Comfort was an English habit then, not merely an English word.'

'And do you really think they were easier landlords than our present ones?' said Egremont, inquiringly.

'Human nature would tell us that, even if history did not confess it. The monastics could possess no private property; they could save no money; they could bequeath nothing. They lived, received, and expended in common. The monastery, too, was a proprietor that never died and never wasted. The farmer had a deathless landlord then; not a harsh guardian, or a grinding mortgagee, or a dilatory master in chancery: all was certain; the manor had not to dread a change of lords, or the oaks to tremble at the axe of the squandering heir. How proud we are still in England of an old family, though, God knows, 'tis

rare to see one now. Yet the people like to say, "We held under him, and his father and his grandfather before him": they know that such a tenure is a benefit. The abbot was ever the same. The monks were, in short, in every district a point of refuge for all who needed succour, counsel, and protection; a body of individuals having no cares of their own, with wisdom to guide the inexperienced, with wealth to relieve the suffering, and often with power to protect the oppressed.'

'You plead their cause with feeling,' said Egremont, not unmoved.

'It is my own; they were the sons of the people, like myself.'

'I had thought rather these monasteries were the resort of the younger branches of the aristocracy,' said Egremont.

'Instead of the pension list,' replied his companion, smiling, but not with bitterness. 'Well, if we must have an aristocracy, I would rather that its younger branches should be monks and nuns than colonels without regiments, or housekeepers of royal palaces that exist only in name. Besides, see what advantage to a minister if the unendowed aristocracy were thus provided for now. He need not, like a minister in these days, entrust the conduct of public affairs to individuals notoriously incompetent, appoint to the command of expeditions generals who never saw a field, make governors of colonies out of men who never could govern themselves, or find an ambassador in a broken dandy or a blasted favourite. It is true that many of the monks and nuns were persons of noble birth. Why should they not have been? The aristocracy had their share; no more. They, like all other

classes, were benefited by the monasteries: but the list of the mitred abbots, when they were suppressed, shows that the great majority of the heads of houses were of the people.'

'Well, whatever difference of opinion may exist on these points,' said Egremont, 'there is one on which there can be no controversy: the monks were great architects.'

'Ah! there it is,' said the stranger, in a tone of plaintiveness; 'if the world only knew what they had lost! I am sure that not the faintest idea is generally prevalent of the appearance of England before and since the dissolution. Why, sir, in England and Wales alone, there were of these institutions of different sizes, I mean monasteries, and chantries and chapels, and great hospitals, considerably upwards of three thousand; all of them fair buildings, many of them of exquisite beauty. There were on an average in every shire at least twenty structures such as this was; in this great county double that number: establishments that were as vast and as magnificent and as beautiful as your Belvoirs and your Chatsworths, your Wentworths and your Stowes. Try to imagine the effect of thirty or forty Chatsworths in this county, the proprietors of which were never absent. You complain enough now of absentees. The monks were never non-resident. They expended their revenue among those whose labour had produced it. These holy men, too, built and planted, as they did everything else, for posterity: their churches were cathedrals; their schools colleges; their halls and libraries the muniment rooms of kingdoms; their woods and waters, their farms and gardens, were laid out and disposed on a scale and in a spirit that are

now extinct; they made the country beautiful, and the people proud of their country.'

'Yet if the monks were such public benefactors, why did not the people rise in their favour?'

'They did, but too late. They struggled for a century, but they struggled against property, and they were beat. As long as the monks existed, the people, when aggrieved, had property on their side. And now 'tis all over,' said the stranger; 'and travellers come and stare at these ruins, and think themselves very wise to moralise over time. They are the children of violence, not of time. It is war that created these ruins, civil war, of all our civil wars the most inhuman, for it was waged with the unresisting. The monasteries were taken by storm, they were sacked, gutted, battered with warlike instruments, blown up with gunpowder; you may see the marks of the blast against the new tower here. Never was such a plunder. The whole face of the country for a century was that of a land recently invaded by a ruthless enemy; it was worse than the Norman conquest; nor has England ever lost this character of ravage. I don't know whether the union workhouses will remove it. They are building something for the people at last. After an experiment of three centuries, your gaols being full, and your treadmills losing something of their virtue, you have given us a substitute for the monasteries.'

'You lament the old faith,' said Egremont, in a tone of respect.

'I am not viewing the question as one of faith,' said the stranger. 'It is not as a matter of religion, but as a matter of right, that I am considering it: as a matter, I should say, of private right and public

happiness. You might have changed, if you thought fit, the religion of the abbots as you changed the religion of the bishops: but you had no right to deprive men of their property, and property moreover which, under their administration, so mainly contributed to the welfare of the community.'

'As for community,' said a voice which proceeded neither from Egremont nor the stranger, 'with the monasteries expired the only type that we ever had in England of such an intercourse. There is no community in England; there is aggregation, but aggregation under circumstances which make it rather a dissociating than a uniting principle.'

It was a still voice that uttered these words, yet one of a peculiar character; one of those voices that instantly arrest attention: gentle and yet solemn, earnest yet unimpassioned. With a step as whispering as his tone, the man who had been kneeling by the tomb had unobserved joined his associate and Egremont. He hardly reached the middle height; his form slender, but well-proportioned; his pale countenance, slightly marked with the small-pox, was redeemed from absolute ugliness by a highly intellectual brow, and large dark eyes that indicated deep sensibility and great quickness of apprehension. Though young, he was already a little bald; he was dressed entirely in black; the fairness of his linen, the neatness of his beard, his gloves much worn, yet carefully mended, intimated that his faded garments were the result of necessity rather than of negligence.

'You also lament the dissolution of these bodies,' said Egremont.

'There is so much to lament in the world in

which we live,' said the younger of the strangers, 'that I can spare no pang for the past.'

'Yet you approve of the principle of their society; you prefer it, you say, to our existing life.'

'Yes; I prefer association to gregariousness.'

'That is a distinction,' said Egremont, musingly.

'It is a community of purpose that constitutes society,' continued the younger stranger; 'without that, men may be drawn into contiguity, but they still continue virtually isolated.'

'And is that their condition in cities?'

'It is their condition everywhere; but in cities that condition is aggravated. A density of population implies a severer struggle for existence, and a consequent repulsion of elements brought into too close contact. In great cities men are brought together by the desire of gain. They are not in a state of co-operation, but of isolation, as to the making of fortunes; and for all the rest they are careless of neighbours. Christianity teaches us to love our neighbour as ourself; modern society acknowledges no neighbour.'

'Well, we live in strange times,' said Egremont, struck by the observation of his companion, and relieving a perplexed spirit by an ordinary exclamation, which often denotes that the mind is more stirred than it cares to acknowledge, or at the moment is able to express.

'When the infant begins to walk, it also thinks that it lives in strange times,' said his companion.

'Your inference?' asked Egremont.

'That society, still in its infancy, is beginning to feel its way.'

'This is a new reign,' said Egremont, 'perhaps it is a new era.'

'I think so,' said the younger stranger.

'I hope so,' said the elder one.

'Well, society may be in its infancy,' said Egremont, slightly smiling; 'but, say what you like, our Queen reigns over the greatest nation that ever existed.'

'Which nation?' asked the younger stranger, 'for she reigns over two.'

The stranger paused; Egremont was silent, but looked inquiringly.

'Yes,' resumed the younger stranger after a moment's interval. 'Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.'

'You speak of—' said Egremont, hesitatingly.

'The Rich and the Poor.'

At this moment a sudden flush of rosy light, suffusing the grey ruins, indicated that the sun had just fallen; and, through a vacant arch that overlooked them, alone in the resplendent sky, glittered the twilight star. The hour, the scene, the solemn stillness and the softening beauty, repressed controversy, induced even silence. The last words of the stranger lingered in the ear of Egremont; his musing spirit was teeming with many thoughts, many emotions; when from the Lady's chapel there rose the evening hymn to the Virgin. A single voice; but tones of almost supernatural sweetness; tender and solemn, yet flexible and thrilling.

Egremont started from his reverie. He would have spoken, but he perceived that the elder of the strangers had risen from his resting-place, and, with downcast eyes and crossed arms, was on his knees. The other remained standing in his former posture.

The divine melody ceased; the elder stranger rose; the words were on the lips of Egremont that would have asked some explanation of this sweet and holy mystery, when, in the vacant and star-lit arch on which his glance was fixed, he beheld a female form. She was apparently in the habit of a Religious, yet scarcely could be a nun, for her veil, if indeed it were a veil, had fallen on her shoulders, and revealed her thick tresses of long fair hair. The blush of deep emotion lingered on a countenance which, though extremely young, was impressed with a character of almost divine majesty; while her dark eyes and long dark lashes, contrasting with the brightness of her complexion and the luxuriance of her radiant locks, combined to produce a beauty as rare as it is choice; and so strange, that Egremont might for a moment have been pardoned for believing her a seraph, who had lighted on this sphere, or the fair phantom of some saint haunting the sacred ruins of her desecrated fane.

CHAPTER XII.

Domestic Tyranny.

'I UNDERSTAND, then,' said Lord Marney to his brother, as on the evening of the same day they were seated together in the drawing-room, in close converse, 'I understand, then, that you have in fact paid nothing, and that my mother will give you a thousand pounds. That won't go very far.'

'It will hardly pay for the chairing,' said Egremont; 'the restoration of the family influence was celebrated on so great a scale.'

'The family influence must be supported,' said Lord Marney, 'and my mother will give you a thousand pounds; as I said, that will not do much for you, but I like her spirit. Contests are expensive things, yet I quite approve of what you have done, especially as you won. It is a great thing in these ten-pound days to win your first contest, and shows powers of calculation which I respect. Everything in this world is calculation; there is no such thing as luck, depend upon it; and if you go on calculating with equal exactness, you must succeed in life. Now, the question is, what is to be done with your election bills?'

'Exactly.'

'You want to know what I will do for you, or rather what I can do for you; that is the point. My inclination of course is to do everything for you; but when I calculate my resources, I may find that they are not equal to my inclination.'

'I am sure, George, you will do everything, and more than everything, you ought.'

'I am extremely pleased about this thousand pounds of my mother, Charles.'

'Most admirable of her! But she always is so generous!'

'Her jointure has been most regularly paid,' continued Lord Marney. 'Always be exact in your payments, Charles. There is no end to the good it produces. Now, if I had not been so regular in paying my mother her jointure, she would not in all probability have been able to give you this thousand pounds, and therefore, to a certain extent, you are indebted for this thousand pounds to me.'

Egremont drew up a little, but said nothing.

'I am obliged to pay my mother her jointure, whether ricks are burnt or not,' said Lord Marney. 'It's very hard, don't you think so?'

'But these ricks were Bingley's!'

'But he was not insured, and he will want some reduction in his rent, and if I do not see fit to allow it him, which I probably shall not, for he ought to have calculated on these things, I have ricks of my own, and they may be burnt any night.'

'But you, of course, are insured?'

'No, I am not, I calculate 'tis better to run the risk.'

'I wonder why ricks are burnt now, and were not in old days,' said Egremont.

'Because there is a surplus population in the kingdom,' said Lord Marney, 'and no rural police in the county.'

'You were speaking of the election, George,' said Egremont, not without reluctance, yet anxious, as the ice had been broken, to bring the matter to a result. Lord Marney, before the election, had written, in reply to his mother consulting him on the step, a letter with which she was delighted, but which Egremont at the time could have wished to have been more explicit. However, in the excitement attendant on a first contest, and influenced by the person whose judgment always swayed, and, in the present case, was peculiarly entitled to sway him, he stifled his scruples, and persuaded himself that he was a candidate, not only with the sanction but at the instance of his brother. 'You were speaking of the election, George,' said Egremont.

'About the election, Charles. Well, the long and short of it is this: that I wish to see you comfortable. To be harassed about money is one of the most disagreeable incidents of life. It ruffles the temper, lowers the spirits, disturbs the rest, and finally breaks up one's health. Always, if you possibly can, keep square. And if by any chance you do find yourself in a scrape, come to me. There is nothing under those circumstances like the advice of a cool-blooded friend.'

'As valuable as the assistance of a cold-hearted one,' thought Egremont, who did not fancy too much the tone of this conversation.

'But there is one thing of which you must particularly beware,' continued Lord Marney, 'there is one thing worse even than getting into difficulties—

patching them up. The patching-up system is fatal; it is sure to break down; you never get clear. Now, what I want to do for you, Charles, is to put you right altogether. I want to see you square and more than square, in a position which will for ever guarantee you from any annoyance of this kind.'

'He is a good fellow, after all,' thought Egremont.

'That thousand pounds of my mother was very apropos,' said Lord Marney; 'I suppose it was a sop that will keep them all right till we have made our arrangements.'

'Oh! there is no pressure of that kind,' said Egremont; 'if I see my way, and write to them, of course they will be quite satisfied.'

'Excellent,' said Lord Marney; 'and nothing could be more convenient to me, for, between ourselves, my balances are very low at this moment. The awful expenditure of keeping up this place! And then such terrible incumbrances as I came to!'

'Incumbrances, George! Why, I thought you had not any. There was not a single mortgage.'

'No mortgages; they are nothing; you find them, you get used to them, and you calculate accordingly. You quite forget the portions for younger children.'

'Yes; but you had plenty of ready money for them.'

'I had to pay them though,' said Lord Marney. 'Had I not I might have bought Grimblethorpe with the money; such an opportunity will never occur again.'

'But you talked of incumbrances,' said Egremont.

'Ah! my dear fellow,' said Lord Marney, 'you don't know what it is to have to keep up an estate like

this; and very lucky for you. It is not the easy life you dream of. There are buildings; I am ruined in buildings; our poor dear father thought he left me Marney without an incumbrance; why, there was not a barn on the whole estate that was weather-proof; not a farm-house that was not half in ruins. What I have spent in buildings! And draining! Though I make my own tiles, draining, my dear fellow, is a something of which you have not the least idea!'

'Well,' said Egremont, anxious to bring his brother back to the point, 'you think, then, I had better write to them and say—'

'Ah! now for your business,' said Lord Marney. 'Now, I will tell you what I can do for you. I was speaking to Arabella about it last night; she quite approves my idea. You remember the De Mowbrays? Well, we are going to stay at Mowbray Castle, and you are to go with us. It is the first time they have received company since their great loss. Ah! you were abroad at the time, and so you are behindhand. Lord Mowbray's only son, Fitz-Warene, you remember him, a deuced clever fellow, he died about a year ago, in Greece, of a fever. Never was such a blow! His two sisters, Lady Joan and Lady Maud, are looked upon as the greatest heiresses in the kingdom: but I know Mowbray well; he will make an elder son of his elder daughter. She will have it all; she is one of Arabella's dearest friends, and you are to marry her.'

Egremont stared at his brother, who patted him on the back with an expression of unusual kindness, adding, 'You have no idea what a load this has taken off my mind, my dear Charles; so great has my anxiety always been about you, particularly of late. To see you lord of Mowbray Castle will realise my fond-

est hopes. That is a position fit for a man, and I know none more worthy of it than yourself, though I am your brother who say so. Now let us come and speak to Arabella about it.'

So saying, Lord Marney, followed somewhat reluctantly by his brother, advanced to the other end of the drawing-room, where his wife was employed with her embroidery-frame, and seated next to her young friend, Miss Poinsett, who was playing chess with Captain Grouse, a member of the chess club, and one of the most capital performers extant.

'Well, Arabella,' said Lord Marney, 'it is all settled; Charles agrees with me about going to Mowbray Castle, and I think the sooner we go the better. What do you think of the day after to-morrow? That will suit me exactly, and therefore I think we had better fix on it. We will consider it settled.'

Lady Marney looked embarrassed, and a little distressed. Nothing could be more unexpected by her than this proposition; nothing more inconvenient than the arrangement. It was true that Lady Joan Fitz-Warene had invited them to Mowbray, and she had some vague intention, some day or other, of deliberating whether they should avail themselves of this kindness; but to decide upon going, and upon going instantly, without the least consultation, the least enquiry as to the suitableness of the arrangement, the visit of Miss Poinsett abruptly and ungraciously terminated, for example—all this was vexatious, distressing: a mode of management which out of the simplest incidents of domestic life contrived to extract some degree of perplexity and annoyance.

'Do you not think, George,' said Lady Marney, 'that we had better talk it over a little?'

'Not at all,' said Lord Marney; 'Charles will go, and it quite suits me, and therefore what necessity for any consultation?'

'Oh! if you and Charles like to go, certainly,' said Lady Marney, in a hesitating tone; 'only I shall be very sorry to lose your society.'

'How do you mean lose our society, Arabella? Of course you must go with us. I particularly want you to go. You are Lady Joan's most intimate friend; I believe there is no one she likes so much.'

'I cannot go the day after to-morrow,' said Lady Marney, speaking in a whisper, and looking volumes of deprecation.

'I cannot help it,' said Lord Marney; 'you should have told me this before. I wrote to Mowbray to-day, that we should be with him the day after to-morrow, and stay a week.'

'But you never mentioned it to me,' said Lady Marney, slightly blushing, and speaking in a tone of gentle reproach.

'I should like to know when I am to find time to mention the contents of every letter I write,' said Lord Marney: 'particularly with all the vexatious business I have had on my hands to-day. But so it is; the more one tries to save you trouble, the more discontented you get.'

'No, not discontented, George.'

'I do not know what you call discontented: but when a man has made every possible arrangement to please you and everybody, and all his plans are to be set aside, merely because the day he has fixed on does not exactly suit your fancy, if that be not discontent, I should like very much to know what is, Arabella.'

Lady Marney did not reply. Always sacrificed, always yielding, the moment she attempted to express an opinion, she ever seemed to assume the position, not of the injured, but the injurer.

Arabella was a woman of abilities, which she had cultivated. She had excellent sense, and possessed many admirable qualities; she was far from being devoid of sensibility; but her sweet temper shrank from controversy, and nature had not endowed her with a spirit which could direct and control. She yielded without a struggle to the arbitrary will and unreasonable caprice of a husband who was scarcely her equal in intellect, and far her inferior in all the genial qualities of our nature, but who governed her by his iron selfishness.

Lady Marney absolutely had no will of her own. A hard, exact, literal, bustling, acute being environed her existence; directed, planned, settled everything. Her life was a series of petty sacrifices and baulked enjoyments. If her carriage were at the door, she was never certain that she should not have to send it away; if she had asked some friends to her house, the chances were she should have to put them off; if she were reading a novel, Lord Marney asked her to copy a letter; if she were going to the opera, she found that Lord Marney had got seats for her and some friend in the House of Lords, and seemed expecting the strongest expressions of delight and gratitude from her for his unasked and inconvenient kindness. Lady Marney had struggled against this tyranny in the earlier days of their union. Innocent, inexperienced Lady Marney! As if it were possible for a wife to contend against a selfish husband, at once sharp-witted and blunt-hearted! She had ap-

pealed to him, she had even reproached him; she had wept, once she had knelt. But Lord Marney looked upon these demonstrations as the disordered sensibility of a girl unused to the marriage state, and ignorant of the wise authority of husbands, of which he deemed himself a model. And so, after a due course of initiation, Lady Marney, invisible for days, plunged in remorseful reveries in the mysteries of her boudoir, and her lord dining at a club, and going to the minor theatres, the countess was broken in.

Lord Marney, who was fond of chess, turned out Captain Grouse, and gallantly proposed to finish his game with Miss Poinsett, which Miss Poinsett, who understood Lord Marney as well as he understood chess, took care speedily to lose, so that his lordship might encounter a champion worthy of him. Egremont, seated by his sister-in-law, and anxious by kind words to soothe the irritation which he had observed with pain his brother create, entered into easy talk, and, after some time, said, 'I find you have been good enough to mould my destiny.'

Lady Marney looked a little surprised, and then said, 'How so?'

'You have decided on, I hear, the most important step of my life.'

'Indeed you perplex me.'

'Lady Joan Fitz-Warene, your friend—'

The countess blushed; the name was a clue which she could follow, but Egremont nevertheless suspected that the idea had never previously occurred to her. Lady Joan she described as not beautiful; certainly not beautiful; nobody would consider her beautiful, many would, indeed, think her quite the reverse; and yet she had a look, one particular look. when, according

to Lady Marney, she was more than beautiful. But she was very clever, very indeed, something quite extraordinary.

'Accomplished?'

'Oh! far beyond that; I have heard even men say that no one knew so much.'

'A regular blue?'

'Oh! no; not at all a blue; not that kind of knowledge. But languages and learned books; Arabic, and Hebrew, and old manuscripts. And then she has an observatory, and was the first person who discovered the comet. Dr. Buckland swears by her; and she corresponds with Arago.'

'And her sister, is she the same?'

'Lady Maud: she is very religious. I do not know her so well.'

'Is she pretty?'

'Some people admire her much.'

'I never was at Mowbray, what sort of a place is it?'

'Oh! it is very grand,' said Lady Marney; 'but, like all places in the manufacturing districts, very disagreeable. You never have a clear sky. Your toilette table is covered with blacks; the deer in the park seem as if they had bathed in a lake of Indian ink; and as for the sheep, you expect to see chimney-sweeps for the shepherds.'

'And do you really mean to go on Thursday?' said Egremont: 'I think we had better put it off.'

'We must go,' said Lady Marney, with a sort of sigh, and shaking her head.

'Let me speak to Marney.'

'Oh! no. We must go. I am annoyed about this dear little Poinsett: she has been to stay with me so

very often, and she has been here only three days. When she comes in again, I wish you would ask her to sing, Charles.'

Soon the dear little Poinsett was singing, much gratified by being invited to the instrument by Mr. Egremont, who for a few minutes hung over her, and then, evidently under the influence of her tones, walked up and down the room, and only speaking to beg that she would continue her charming performances. Lady Marney was engrossed with her embroidery; her lord and the captain with their game.

And of what was Egremont thinking? Of Mowbray, be you sure. And of Lady Joan or Lady Maud? Not exactly. Mowbray was the name of the town to which the strangers he had met with in the Abbey were bound. It was the only piece of information that he had been able to obtain of them; and that casually.

When the fair vision of the starlit arch, about to descend to her two companions, perceived that they were in conversation with a stranger, she hesitated, and in a moment withdrew. Then the elder of the travellers, exchanging a glance with his friend, bade good even to Egremont.

'Our way perhaps lies the same?' said Egremont.

'I should deem not,' said the stranger, 'nor are we alone.'

'And we must be stirring, for we have far to go,' said he who was dressed in black.

'My journey is brief,' said Egremont, making a desperate effort to invite communication; 'and I am on horseback!'

'And we on foot,' said the elder; 'nor shall we stop till we reach Mowbray;' and, with a slight

salute, they left Egremont alone. There was something in the manner of the elder stranger which repressed the possibility of Egremont following him. Leaving then the cloister garden in another direction, he speculated on meeting them outside the Abbey. He passed through the Lady's chapel. The beautiful Religious was not there. He gained the west front; no one was visible. He took a rapid survey of each side of the Abbey; not a being to be recognised. He fancied they must have advanced towards the Abbey farm; yet they might have proceeded further on in the dale. Perplexed, he lost time. Finally he proceeded towards the farm, but did not overtake them; reached it, but learned nothing of them; and arrived at his brother's full of a strange yet sweet perplexity.

CHAPTER XIII.

Transformation of a Waiter to a Nabob.

N A commercial country like England, every half century develops some new and vast source of public wealth, which brings into national notice a new and powerful class. A couple of centuries ago, a turkey merchant was the great creator of wealth; the West India planter followed him. In the middle of the last century appeared the nabob. These characters in their zenith in turn merged in the land, and became English aristocrats; while, the Levant decaying, the West Indies exhausted, and Hindostan plundered, the breeds died away, and now exist only in our English comedies, from Wycherly and Congreve to Cumberland and Morton. The expenditure of the revolutionary war produced the loanmonger, who succeeded the nabob; and the application of science to industry developed the manufacturer, who in turn aspires to be 'large acred,' and always will, so long as we have a territorial constitution; a better security for the preponderance of the landed interest than any corn-law, fixed or fluctuating.

Of all these characters, the one that on the whole made the largest fortunes in the most rapid manner,

and we do not forget the marvels of the Waterloo loan, or the miracles of Manchester during the Continental blockade, was the Anglo-East-Indian about the time that Hastings was first appointed to the great viceroyalty. It was not unusual for men in positions so obscure that their names had never reached the public in this country, and who yet had not been absent from their native land for a longer period than the siege of Troy, to return with their million.

One of the most fortunate of this class of obscure adventurers was a certain John Warren. A few years before the breaking out of the American war, he was a waiter at a celebrated club in St. James' Street; a quick, yet steady young fellow; assiduous, discreet, and very civil. In this capacity, he pleased a gentleman who was just appointed to the government of Madras, and who wanted a valet. Warren, though prudent, was adventurous; and accepted the opening which he believed fortune offered him. He was prescient. The voyage in those days was an affair of six months. During this period, Warren still more ingratiated himself with his master. He wrote a good hand, and his master a very bad one. He had a natural talent for accounts; a kind of information which was useful to his employer. He arrived at Madras, no longer a valet, but a private secretary.

His master went out to make a fortune; but he was indolent and had indeed none of the qualities for success, except his great position. Warren had every quality but that. The basis of the confederacy therefore was intelligible; it was founded on mutual interests and cemented by reciprocal assistance. The governor granted monopolies to the secretary, who apportioned a due share to his sleeping partner. There appeared one

of those dearths not unusual in Hindostan; the population of the famished province cried out for rice; the stores of which, diminished by nature, had for months mysteriously disappeared. A provident administration it seems had invested the public revenue in its benevolent purchase; the misery was so excessive that even pestilence was anticipated, when the great forestallers came to the rescue of the people over whose destinies they presided; and at the same time fed, and pocketed, millions.

This was the great stroke of the financial genius of Warren. He was satisfied. He longed once more to see St. James' Street, and to become a member of the club where he had once been a waiter. But he was the spoiled child of fortune, who would not so easily spare him. The governor died, and appointed his secretary his sole executor. Not that his Excellency particularly trusted his agent, but he dared not confide the knowledge of his affairs to any other individual. The estate was so complicated that Warren offered the heirs a good round sum for his quittance, and to take the settlement upon himself. India so distant, and Chancery so near, the heirs accepted the proposition. Winding up this estate, Warren avenged the cause of plundered provinces; and the House of Commons itself, with Burke and Francis at its head, could scarcely have mulcted the late governor more severely.

A Mr. Warren, of whom no one had ever heard except that he was a nabob, had recently returned from India, and purchased a large estate in the north of England; was returned to Parliament one of the representatives of a close borough which he had also purchased; a quiet, gentlemanlike, middle-aged man,

with no decided political opinions; and, as parties were then getting equal, of course much courted. The throes of Lord North's administration were commencing. The minister asked the new member to dine with him, and found the new member singularly free from all party prejudices. Mr. Warren was one of those members who announced their determination to listen to the debates and to be governed by the arguments. All complimented him, all spoke to him. Mr. Fox declared that he was a most superior man; Mr. Burke said that these were the men who could alone save the country. Mrs. Crewe asked him to supper; he was caressed by the most brilliant of duchesses.

At length there arrived one of those fierce trials of strength, which precede the fall of a minister, but which sometimes, from peculiar circumstances, as in the instances of Walpole and Lord North, are not immediate in their results. How would Warren vote? was the great question. He would listen to the arguments. Burke was full of confidence that he should catch Warren. The day before the debate there was a levée, which Mr. Warren attended. The Sovereign stopped him, spoke to him, smiled on him, asked him many questions: about himself, the House of Commons, how he liked it, how he liked England. There was a flutter in the circle; a new favourite at court.

The debate came off, the division took place. Mr. Warren voted for the minister. Burke denounced him; the king made him a baronet.

Sir John Warren made a great alliance, at least for him; he married the daughter of an Irish earl; became one of the king's friends; supported Lord Shelburne,

threw over Lord Shelburne, had the tact early to discover that Mr. Pitt was the man to stick to; stuck to him. Sir John Warren bought another estate, and picked up another borough. He was fast becoming a personage. Throughout the Indian debates he kept himself quiet; once indeed in vindication of Mr. Hastings, whom he greatly admired, he ventured to correct Mr. Francis on a point of fact with which he was personally acquainted. He thought that it was safe, but he never spoke again. He knew not the resources of vindictive genius or the powers of a malignant imagination. Burke owed the nabob a turn for the vote which had gained him a baronetcy. The orator seized the opportunity, and alarmed the secret conscience of the Indian adventurer by his dark allusions and his fatal familiarity with the subject.

Another estate, however, and another borough were some consolation for this little misadventure; and in time the French Revolution, to Sir John's great relief, turned the public attention for ever from Indian affairs. The nabob, from the faithful adherent of Mr. Pitt, had become even his personal friend. The wits, indeed, had discovered that he had been a waiter; and endless were the epigrams of Fitzpatrick and the jokes of Hare; but Mr. Pitt cared nothing about the origin of his supporters. On the contrary, Sir John was exactly the individual from whom the minister meant to carve out his plebeian aristocracy; and, using his friend as a feeler before he ventured on his greater operations, the nabob one morning was transformed into an Irish baron.

The new Baron figured in his patent as Lord Fitz-Warene, his Norman origin and descent from the old barons of this name having been discovered at Heralds'

College. This was a rich harvest for Fitzpatrick and Hare; but the public gets accustomed to everything, and has an easy habit of faith. The new Baron cared nothing for ridicule, for he was working for posterity. He was compensated for every annoyance by the remembrance that the St. James' Street waiter was ennobled, and by his determination that his children should rank still higher in the proud peerage of his country. So he obtained the royal permission to resume the surname and arms of his ancestors, as well as their title.

There was an ill-natured story set afloat that Sir John owed this promotion to having lent money to the minister; but this was a calumny. Mr. Pitt never borrowed money of his friends. Once, indeed, to save his library, he took a thousand pounds from an individual on whom he had conferred high rank and immense promotion: and this individual, who had the minister's bond when Mr. Pitt died, insisted on his right, and actually extracted the 1,000*l.* from the insolvent estate of his magnificent patron. But Mr. Pitt always preferred a usurer to a friend; and to the last day of his life borrowed money at fifty per cent.

The nabob departed this life before the minister, but he lived long enough to realise his most aspiring dream. Two years before his death, the Irish baron was quietly converted into an English peer; and without exciting any attention, all the squibs of Fitzpatrick, all the jokes of Hare, quite forgotten, the waiter of the St. James' Street club took his seat in the most natural manner possible in the House of Lords.

The great estate of the late Lord Fitz-Warene was situate at Mowbray, a village which principally be-

longed to him, and near which he had raised a Gothic castle, worthy of his Norman name and ancestry. Mowbray was one of those places which, during the long war, had expanded from an almost unknown village to a large and flourishing manufacturing town; a circumstance which, as Lady Marney observed, might have somewhat deteriorated the atmosphere of the splendid castle, but which had nevertheless trebled the vast rental of its lord. He who had succeeded to his father was Altamont Belvedere, named after his mother's family, Fitz-Warene, Lord Fitz-Warene. He was not deficient in abilities, though he had not his father's talents, but he was over-educated for his intellect; a common misfortune. The new Lord Fitz-Warene was the most aristocratic of breathing beings. He most fully, entirely, and absolutely believed in his pedigree; his coat-of-arms was emblazoned on every window, embroidered on every chair, carved in every corner. Shortly after his father's death, he was united to the daughter of a ducal house, by whom he had a son and two daughters, christened by names which the ancient records of the Fitz-Warenes authorised. His son, who gave promise of abilities which might have rendered the family really distinguished, was Valence; his daughters, Joan and Maud. All that seemed wanting to the glory of the house was a great distinction, of which a rich peer, with six seats in the House of Commons, could not ultimately despair. Lord Fitz-Warene aspired to rank among the earls of England. But the successors of Mr. Pitt were strong; they thought the Fitz-Warenes had already been too rapidly advanced; it was whispered that the king did not like the new man; that his Majesty thought him pompous, full of pretence, in short, a fool. But though

the successors of Mr. Pitt managed to govern the country for twenty years, and were generally very strong, in such an interval of time, however good their management or great their luck, there were inevitably occasions when they found themselves in difficulties, when it was necessary to conciliate the lukewarm or to reward the devoted. Lord Fitz-Warene well understood how to avail himself of these occasions: it was astonishing how conscientious and scrupulous he became during Walcheren expeditions, Manchester massacres, Queen's trials. Every scrape of the government was a step in the ladder to the great borough-monger. The old king, too, had disappeared from the stage; and the tawdry grandeur of the great Norman peer rather suited George the Fourth. He was rather a favourite at the Cottage; they wanted his six votes for Canning; he made his terms; and one of the means by which we got a man of genius for a minister was elevating Lord Fitz-Warene in the peerage, by the style and title of Earl de Mowbray of Mowbray Castle.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Fair Religious.

E MUST now for a while return to the strangers of the Abbey ruins. When the two men had joined the beautiful Religious, whose apparition had so startled Egremont, they all three quitted the Abbey by a way which led them by the back of the cloister garden, and so on by the bank of the river for about a hundred yards, when they turned up the winding glen of a dried-up tributary stream. At the head of the glen, at which they soon arrived, was a beer-shop, screened by some huge elms from the winds that blew over the vast moor, which, except in the direction of Mardale, now extended as far as the eye could reach. Here the companions stopped, the beautiful Religious seated herself on a stone bench beneath the trees, while the elder stranger, calling out to the inmate of the house to apprise him of his return, himself proceeded to a neighbouring shed, whence he brought forth a small rough pony, with a rude saddle, but one evidently intended for a female rider.

'It is well,' said the taller of the men, 'that I am not a member of a temperance society like you, Ste-

phen, or it would be difficult to reward this good man for his care of our steed. I will take a cup of the drink of Saxon kings.' Then leading up the pony to the Religious, he placed her on its back with gentleness and much natural grace, saying at the same time in a subdued tone, 'And you; shall I bring you a glass of nature's wine?'

'I have drunk of the spring of the Holy Abbey,' said the Religious, 'and none other must touch my lips this eve.'

'Come, our course must be brisk,' said the elder of the men, as he gave up his glass to their host and led off the pony, Stephen walking on the other side.

Though the sun had fallen, the twilight was still glowing, and even on this wide expanse the air was still. The vast and undulating surface of the brown and purple moor, varied occasionally by some fantastic rocks, gleamed in the shifting light. Hesperus was the only star that yet was visible, and seemed to move before them and lead them on their journey.

'I hope,' said the Religious, turning to the elder stranger, 'if ever we regain our right, my father, and that we ever can, save by the interposition of divine will, seems to me clearly impossible, that you will never forget how bitter it is to be driven from the soil; and that you will bring back the people to the land.'

'I would pursue our right for no other cause,' said the father. 'After centuries of sorrow and degradation, it should never be said that we had no sympathy with the sad and the oppressed.'

'After centuries of sorrow and degradation,' said Stephen, 'let it not be said that you acquire your right only to create a baron or a squire.'

'Nay, thou shalt have thy way, Stephen,' said his companion, smiling, 'if ever the good hour come. As many acres as thou choosest for thy new Jerusalem.'

'Call it what you will, Walter,' replied Stephen; 'but if I ever gain the opportunity of fully carrying the principle of association into practice, I will sing *Nunc me dimittes.*'

'*Nunc me dimittes,*' burst forth the Religious, in a voice of thrilling melody, and she pursued for some minutes the divine canticle. Her companions gazed on her with an air of affectionate reverence as she sang; each instant the stars becoming brighter, the wide moor assuming a darker hue.

'Now, tell me, Stephen,' said the Religious, turning her head and looking round with a smile, 'think you not it would be a fairer lot to bide this night at some kind monastery, than to be hastening now to that least picturesque of all creations, a railway station?'

'The railways will do as much for mankind as the monasteries did,' said Stephen.

'Had it not been for the railway, we should never have made our visit to Marney Abbey,' said the elder of the travellers.

'Nor seen its last abbot's tomb,' said the Religious. 'When I marked your name upon the stone, my father,— woe is me, but I felt sad indeed, that it was reserved for our blood to surrender to ruthless men that holy trust.'

'He never surrendered,' said her father. 'He was tortured and hanged.'

'He is with the communion of saints,' said the Religious.

'I would I could see a communion of men,' said Stephen, 'and then there would be no more violence, for there would be no more plunder.'

'You must regain our lands for us, Stephen,' said the Religious; 'promise me, my father, that I shall raise a holy house for pious women, if that ever hap.'

'We will not forget our ancient faith,' said her father, 'the only old thing that has not left us.'

'I cannot understand,' said Stephen, 'why you should ever have lost sight of these papers, Walter.'

'You see, friend, they were never in my possession; they were never mine when I saw them. They were my father's; and he was jealous of all interference. He was a small yeoman, who had risen in the war time, well-to-do in the world, but always hankering after the old tradition that the lands were ours. This Hatton got hold of him; he did his work well, I have heard;—certain it is, my father spared nothing. It is twenty-five years come Martinmas since he brought his writ of right; and though baffled, he was not beaten. But then he died; his affairs were in great confusion; he had mortgaged his land for his writ, and the war prices were gone. There were debts that could not be paid. I had no capital for a farm. I would not sink to be a labourer on the soil that had once been our own. I had just married; it was needful to make a great exertion. I had heard much of the high wages of this new industry; I left the land.'

'And the papers?'

'I never thought of them, or thought of them with disgust, as the cause of my ruin. Then when you came the other day, and showed me in the book that the last Abbot of Marney was a Walter Gerard, the

old feeling stirred again; and I could not help telling you that my fathers fought at Azincourt, though I was only the overlooker at Mr. Trafford's mill.'

'A good old name of the good old faith,' said the Religious; 'and a blessing be on it!'

'We have cause to bless it,' said Gerard. 'I thought it then something to serve a gentleman; and as for my daughter, she, by their goodness, was brought up in holy walls, which have made her what she is.'

'Nature made her what she is,' said Stephen, in a low voice, and speaking not without emotion. Then he continued, in a louder and brisker tone, 'But this Hatton; you know nothing of his whereabouts?'

'Never heard of him since. I had indeed, about a year after my father's death, cause to enquire after him; but he had quitted Mowbray, and none could give me tidings of him. He had lived, I believe, on our lawsuit, and vanished with our hopes.'

After this there was silence; each was occupied with his thoughts, while the influence of the soft night and starry hour induced to contemplation.

'I hear the murmur of the train,' said the Religious.

''Tis the up-train,' said her father. 'We have yet a quarter of an hour; we shall be in good time.'

So saying, he guided the pony to where some lights indicated the station of the railway, which here crossed the moor. There was just time to return the pony to the person at the station from whom it had been borrowed, and obtain their tickets, when the bell of the down-train sounded, and in a few minutes the Religious and her companions were on their way to Mowbray, whither a course of two hours carried them.

It was two hours to midnight when they arrived at Mowbray station, which was about a quarter of a mile from the town. Labour had long ceased; a beautiful heaven, clear and serene, canopied the city of smoke and toil; in all directions rose the columns of the factories, dark and defined in the purple sky; a glittering star sometimes hovering by the crest of their tall and tapering forms.

The travellers proceeded in the direction of a suburb, and approached the high wall of an extensive garden. The moon rose as they reached it, tipped the trees with light, and revealed a lofty and centre portal, by the side of it a wicket, at which Gerard rang. The wicket was quickly opened.

'I fear, holy sister,' said the Religious, 'that I am even later than I promised.'

'Those that come in our Lady's name are ever welcome,' was the reply.

'Sister Marion,' said Gerard to the portress, 'we have been to visit a holy place.'

'All places are holy with holy thoughts, my brother.'

'Dear father, good night,' said the Religious; 'the blessings of all the saints be on thee; and on thee, Stephen, though thou dost not kneel to them!'

'Good night, mine own child,' said Gerard.

'I could believe in saints when I am with thee,' murmured Stephen. 'Good night,—Sybil.'

CHAPTER XV.

Young Blood.

HEN Gerard and his friend quitted the convent they proceeded at a brisk pace into the heart of the town. The streets were nearly empty; and, with the exception of some occasional burst of brawl or merriment from a beer-shop, all was still. The chief street of Mowbray, called Castle Street, after the ruins of the old baronial stronghold in its neighbourhood, was as significant of the present civilisation of this community as the haughty keep had been of its ancient dependence. The dimensions of Castle Street were not unworthy of the metropolis: it traversed a great portion of the town, and was proportionately wide; its broad pavements and its blazing gas-lights indicated its modern order and prosperity; while on each side of the street rose huge warehouses, not as beautiful as the palaces of Venice, but in their way not less remarkable; magnificent shops; and, here and there, though rarely, some ancient factory built among the fields in the infancy of Mowbray by some mill-owner not sufficiently prophetic of the future, or sufficiently confident in the energy and enterprise of his fellow-

citizens, to foresee that the scene of his labours would be the future eyesore of a flourishing posterity.

Pursuing their course along Castle Street for about a quarter of a mile, Gerard and Stephen turned down a street which intersected it, and so on, through a variety of ways and winding lanes, till they arrived at an open portion of the town, a district where streets and squares, and even rows, disappeared, and where the tall chimneys and bulky barrack-looking buildings that rose in all directions, clustering yet isolated, announced that they were in the principal scene of the industry of Mowbray. Crossing this open ground, they gained a suburb, but one of a very different kind from that in which was situate the convent where they had parted with Sybil. This one was populous, noisy, and lighted. It was Saturday night; the streets were thronged; an infinite population kept swarming to and from the close courts and pestilential cul-de-sacs that continually communicated with the streets by narrow archways, like the entrance of hives, so low that you were obliged to stoop for admission: while ascending to these same streets from their dank and dismal dwellings by narrow flights of steps, the subterraneous nation of the cellars poured forth to enjoy the coolness of the summer night, and market for the day of rest. The bright and lively shops were crowded; and groups of purchasers were gathered round the stalls, that, by the aid of glaring lamps and flaunting lanterns, displayed their wares.

'Come, come, it's a prime piece,' said a jolly-looking woman, who was presiding at a stall which, though considerably thinned by previous purchasers,

still offered many temptations to many who could not purchase.

'And so it is, widow,' said a little pale man, wistfully.

'Come, come, it's getting late, and your wife's ill; you're a good soul, we'll say fi'pence a pound, and I'll throw you the scrag end in for love.'

'No butcher's meat to-morrow for us, widow,' said the man.

'And why not, neighbour? with your wages, you ought to live like a prize-fighter, or the Mayor of Mowbray at least.'

'Wages!' said the man: 'I wish you may get 'em. Those villains, Shuffle and Screw, have sarved me with another bate ticket; and a pretty figure too.'

'Oh! the carnal monsters!' exclaimed the widow. 'If their day don't come, the bloody-minded knaves!'

'And for small cops, too! Small cops be hanged! Am I the man to send up a bad-bottomed cop, Widow Carey?'

'You sent up for snicks! I have known you man and boy, John Hill, these twenty summers, and never heard a word against you till you got into Shuffle and Screw's mill. Oh! they are a bad yarn, John.'

'They do us all, widow. They pretends to give the same wages as the rest, and works it out in fines. You can't come, and you can't go, but there's a fine; you're never paid wages but there's a bate ticket. I've heard they keep their whole establishment on factory fines.'

'Soul alive, but those Shuffle and Screw are rotten, snickey, bad yarns,' said Mistress Carey. 'Now, ma'am, if you please; fi'pence ha'penny; no, ma'am, we've no weal left. Weal, indeed! you look wery

like a soul as feeds on weal,' continued Mrs. Carey in an undertone as her declining customer moved away. 'Well, it gets late,' said the widow, 'and if you like to take this scrag end home to your wife, neighbour Hill, we can talk of the rest next Saturday. And what's your will, Sir?' said the widow, with a stern expression, to a youth who now stopped at her stall.

He was about sixteen, with a lithe figure, and a handsome, faded, impudent face. His long, loose white trousers gave him height; he had no waistcoat, but a pink silk handkerchief was twisted carelessly round his neck, and fastened with a large pin, which, whatever were its materials, had unquestionably a gorgeous appearance. A loose frock-coat of a coarse white cloth, and fastened by one button round his waist, completed his habiliments, with the addition of the covering to his head, a high-crowned dark-brown hat, which relieved his complexion, and heightened the effect of his mischievous blue eye.

'Well you need not be so fierce, Mother Carey,' said the youth, with an affected air of deprecation.

'Don't mother me,' said the jolly widow, with a kindling eye; 'go to your own mother, who is dying in a back cellar without a winder, while you've got lodgings in a two-pair.'

'Dying! she's only drunk,' said the youth.

'And if she is only drunk,' rejoined Mrs. Carey, in a passion, 'what makes her drink but toil? working from five o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock at night, and for the like of such as you.'

'That's a good one,' said the youth. 'I should like to know what my mother ever did for me, but give me treacle and laudanum when I was a baby to stop my tongue and fill my stomach; by the token of

which, as my gal says, she stunted the growth of the prettiest figure in all Mowbray.' And here the youth drew himself up, and thrust his hands in the side pockets of his pea-jacket.

'Well, I never!' said Mrs. Carey. 'No; I never heard a thing like that!'

'What, not when you cut up the jackass and sold it for veal cutlets, mother?'

'Hold your tongue, Mr. Imperence,' said the widow. 'It's very well known you're no Christian, and who'll believe what you say?'

'It's very well known that I'm a man what pays his way,' said the boy, 'and don't keep a huckster's stall to sell carrion by starlight; but live in a two-pair, if you please, and has a wife and family, or as good.'

'Oh! you aggravating imp!' exclaimed the widow, in despair, unable to wreak her vengeance on one who kept in a secure position, and whose movements were as nimble as his words.

'Why, Madam Carey, what has Dandy Mick done to thee?' said a good-humoured voice. It came from one of two factory girls who were passing her stall, and stopped. They were gaily dressed, a light handkerchief tied under the chin, their hair scrupulously arranged; they wore coral necklaces and earrings of gold.

'Ah! is it you, my child?' said the widow, who was a good-hearted creature. 'The dandy has been giving me some of his imperence.'

'But I meant nothing, dame,' said Mick. 'It was fun; only fun.'

'Well, let it pass,' said Mrs. Carey. 'And where have you been this long time, my child? And who's your friend?' she added, in a lower tone.

'Well, I have left Mr. Trafford's mill,' said the girl.

'That's a bad job,' said Mrs. Carey; 'for those Traffords are kind to their people. It's a great thing for a young person to be in their mill.'

'So it is,' said the girl; 'but then it was so dull. I can't stand a country life, Mrs. Carey. I must have company.'

'Well, I do love a bit of gossip myself,' said Mrs. Carey, with great frankness.

'And then I'm no scholar,' said the girl, 'and never could take to learning. And those Traffords had so many schools.'

'Learning is better than house and land,' said Mrs. Carey, 'though I'm no scholar myself; but then in my time things was different. But young persons—'

'Yes,' said Mick; 'I don't think I could get through the day if it wurno' for our Institute.'

'And what's that?' asked Mrs. Carey, with a sneer.

'The Shoddy-Court Literary and Scientific, to be sure,' said Mick; 'we have got fifty members, and take in three London papers; one "Northern Star" and two "Moral Worlds."'

'And where are you now, child?' continued the widow to the girl.

'I am at Wiggins and Webster's,' said the girl; 'and this is my partner. We keep house together; we have a very nice room in Arbour Court, No. 7, high up; it's very airy. If you will take a dish of tea with us to-morrow, we expect some friends.'.

'I take it kindly,' said Mrs. Carey; 'and so you keep house together! All the children keep house in these days. Times is changed indeed!'

'And we shall be happy to see you, Mick; and Julia, if you are not engaged,' continued the girl; and she looked at her friend, a pretty demure girl, who immediately said, but in a somewhat faltering tone, 'Oh! that we shall.'

'And what are you going to do now, Caroline?' said Mick.

'Well, we had no thoughts; but I said to Harriet, as it is a fine night, let us walk about as long as we can, and then to-morrow we will lie in bed till afternoon.'

'That's all well eno' in winter-time, with plenty of baccy,' said Mick, 'but at this season of the year I must have life. The moment I came out I bathed in the river, and then went home and dressed,' he added in a satisfied tone; 'and now I am going to the Temple. I'll tell you what, Julia has been pricked to-day with a shuttle; 'tis not much, but she can't go out: I'll stand treat, and take you and your friend to the Temple.'

'Well, that's delight,' said Caroline. 'There's no one does the handsome thing like you, Dandy Mick, and I always say so. Oh! I love the Temple! 'Tis so genteel! I was speaking of it to Harriet last night; she never was there. I proposed to go with her, but two girls alone—you understand me. One does not like to be seen in these places, as if one kept no company.'

'Very true,' said Mick; 'and now we'll be off. Good night, widow.'

'You'll remember us to-morrow evening,' said Caroline.

'To-morrow evening! The Temple!' murmured Mrs. Carey to herself. 'I think the world is turned

upside downwards in these parts. A brat like Mick Radley to live in a two-pair, with a wife and family, or as good, as he says; and this girl asks me to take a dish of tea with her and keeps house! Fathers and mothers goes for nothing,' continued Mrs. Carey, as she took a very long pinch of snuff, and deeply mused. ''Tis the children gets the wages,' she added after a profound pause, 'and there it is.'

CHAPTER XVI.

DEVILSDUST.

IN THE meantime Gerard and Stephen stopped before a tall, thin, stuccoed house, balustraded and friezed, very much lighted both within and without, and from the sounds that issued from it, and the persons who retired and entered, evidently a locality of great resort and bustle. A sign, bearing the title of the Cat and Fiddle, indicated that it was a place of public entertainment, and kept by one who owned the legal name of John Trottman, though that was but a vulgar appellation, lost in his well-earned and far-famed title of Chaffing Jack.

The companions entered the spacious premises; and, making their way to the crowded bar, Stephen, with a glance serious but which indicated intimacy, caught the eye of a comely lady, who presided over the mysteries, and said in a low voice, 'Is he here?'

'In the Temple, Mr. Morley, asking for you and your friend more than once. I think you had better go up. I know he wishes to see you.'

Stephen whispered to Gerard, and after a moment's pause he asked the fair president for a couple

of tickets, for each of which he paid threepence; a sum, however, according to the printed declaration of the voucher, convertible into potential liquid refreshments, no great compensation to a very strict member of the Temperance Society of Mowbray.

A handsome staircase with bright brass banisters led them to an ample landing-place, on which opened a door, now closed, and by which sat a boy who collected the tickets of those who would enter it. The portal was of considerable dimensions and of architectural pretension; it was painted of a bright green colour, the panels gilt. Within the pediment, described in letters of flaming gas you read, 'THE TEMPLE OF THE MUSES.'

Gerard and Morley entered an apartment very long and sufficiently lofty, though rather narrow for such proportions. The ceiling was even richly decorated; the walls were painted, and by a brush of no inconsiderable power. Each panel represented some well-known scene from Shakespeare, Byron, or Scott; King Richard, Mazeppa, the Lady of the Lake, were easily recognised: in one panel, Hubert menaced Arthur; here Haidee rescued Juan; and there Jeanie Deans curtsied before the Queen. The room was very full; some three or four hundred persons were seated in different groups at different tables, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, and even smoking; for, notwithstanding the pictures and the gilding, it was found impossible to forbid, though there were efforts to discourage, this practice, in the Temple of the Muses. Nothing, however, could be more decorous than the general conduct of the company, though they consisted principally of factory people.

The waiters flew about with as much agility as if they were serving nobles. In general the noise

was great, though not disagreeable; sometimes a bell rang, and there was comparative silence, while a curtain drew up at the farther end of the room, opposite to the entrance, where there was a theatre, the stage raised at a due elevation, and adorned with side scenes, from which issued a lady in a fancy dress, who sang a favourite ballad; or a gentleman elaborately habited in a farmer's costume of the old comedy, a bob-wig, silver buttons and buckles, and blue stockings, and who favoured the company with that melancholy effusion called a comic song. Some nights there was music on the stage; a young lady in a white robe with a golden harp, and attended by a gentleman in black mustachios. This was when the principal harpiste of the King of Saxony and his first fiddler happened to be passing through Mowbray, merely by accident, or on a tour of pleasure and instruction, to witness the famous scenes of British industry. Otherwise the audience of the Cat and Fiddle, we mean the Temple of the Muses, were fain to be content with four Bohemian brothers, or an equal number of Swiss sisters. The most popular amusements, however, were the 'Thespian recitations,' by amateurs, or novices who wished to become professional. They tried their metal on an audience which could be critical.

A sharp waiter, with a keen eye on the entering guests, immediately saluted Gerard and his friend, with profuse offers of hospitality, insisting that they wanted much refreshment; that they were both hungry and thirsty; that, if not hungry, they should order something to drink that would give them an appetite; if not inclined to quaff, something to eat that would make them athirst. In the midst of these

embarrassing attentions, he was pushed aside by his master with, 'There, go; hands wanted at the upper end; two American gentlemen from Lowell singing out for sherry cobbler; don't know what it is; give them our bar-mixture; if they complain, say it's the Mowbray slap-bang, and no mistake. Must have a name, Mr. Morley; name's everything; made the fortune of the Temple; if I had called it the Saloon, it never would have filled, and perhaps the magistrates never have granted a licence.'

The speaker was a portly man, who had passed the maturity of manhood, but active as Harlequin. He had a well-favoured countenance; fair, good-humoured, but sly. He was dressed like the head butler of the London Tavern, and was particular as to his white waistcoats and black silk stockings, punctilious as to his knee-buckles, proud of his diamond pin; that is to say, when he officiated at the Temple.

'Your mistress told us we should find you here,' said Stephen, 'and that you wished to see us.'

'Plenty to tell you,' said their host, putting his finger to his nose. 'If information *is* wanted in this part of the world, I flatter myself—Come, Master Gerard, here's a table; what shall I call for? glass of the Mowbray slap-bang? No better; the receipt has been in our family these fifty years. Mr. Morley I know won't join us. Did you say a cup of tea, Mr. Morley? Water, only water; well, that's strange. Boy, alive there! do you hear me call? Water wanted, glass of water for the Secretary of the Mowbray Temperance and Teetotal. Sing it out. I like titled company. Brush!'

'And so you can give us some information about this—'

'Be back directly,' exclaimed their host, darting off with a swift precision that carried him through a labyrinth of tables without the slightest inconvenience to their occupiers. 'Beg pardon, Mr. Morley,' he said, sliding again into his chair; 'but saw one of the American gentlemen brandishing his bowie-knife against one of my waiters; called him Colonel; quieted him directly; a man of his rank brawling with a help; oh! no; not to be thought of; no squabbling here; licence in danger.'

'You were saying—' resumed Morley.

'Ah! yes, about that man Hatton; remember him perfectly well; a matter of twenty, or it may be nineteen years since he bolted. Queer fellow; lived upon nothing; only drank water; no temperance and teetotal then, so no excuse. Beg pardon, Mr. Morley; no offence, I hope; can't bear whims; but respectable societies, if they don't drink, they make speeches, hire your rooms, leads to business.'

'And this Hatton?' said Gerard.

'Ah! a queer fellow; lent him a one-pound note; never saw it again; always remember it; last one-pound note I had. He offered me an old book instead; not in my way; took a china jar for my wife. He kept a curiosity shop; always prowling about the country, picking up old books and hunting after old monuments; called himself an antiquarian; queer fellow, that Hatton.'

'And you have heard of him since?' said Gerard rather impatiently.

'Not a word,' said their host; 'never knew any one who had.'

'I thought you had something to tell us about him,' said Stephen.

'So I have: I can put you in the way of getting hold of him and anything else. I haven't lived in Mowbray man and boy for fifty years; seen it a village, and now a great town full of first-rate institutions and establishments like this,' added their host, surveying the Temple with a glance of admiring complacency; 'I say I haven't lived here all this time and talked to the people for nothing.'

'Well, we are all attention,' said Gerard with a smile.

'Hush!' said their host as a bell sounded, and he jumped up. 'Now ladies, now gentlemen, if you please; silence if you please, for a song from a Polish lady. The Signora sings English like a new-born babe;' and the curtain drew up amid the hushed voices of the company and the restrained clatter of their knives and forks and glasses.

The Polish lady sang 'Cherry Ripe' to the infinite satisfaction of her audience. Young Mowbray indeed, in the shape of Dandy Mick, and some of his followers and admirers, insisted on an encore. The lady, as she retired, curtsied like a prima donna; but the host continued on his legs for some time, throwing open his coat and bowing to his guests, who expressed by their applause how much they approved his enterprise. At length he resumed his seat. 'It's almost too much,' he exclaimed; 'the enthusiasm of these people. I believe they look upon me as a father.'

'And you think you have some clue to this Hatton?' resumed Stephen.

'They say he has no relations,' said their host.

'I have heard as much.'

'Another glass of the bar-mixture, Master Gerard.

What did we call it? Oh! the bricks and beans; the Mowbray bricks and beans; known by that name in the time of my grandfather. No more! No use asking Mr. Morley, I know. Water! well, I must say; and yet, in an official capacity, drinking water is not so unnatural.'

'And Hatton,' said Gerard; 'they say he has no relations.'

'They do, and they say wrong. He has a relation; he has a brother; and I can put you in the way of finding him.'

'Well, that looks like business,' said Gerard; 'and where may he be?'

'Not here,' said their host; 'he never put his foot in the Temple, to my knowledge; and lives in a place where they have as much idea of popular institutions as any Turks or heathen you ever heard of.'

'And where might we find him?' said Stephen.

'What's that?' said their host, jumping up and looking around him. 'Here, boys, brush about. The American gentleman is a-whittling his name on that new mahogany table. Take him the printed list of rules, stuck up in a public place, under a great-coat, and fine him five shillings for damaging the furniture. If he resists, he has paid for his liquor, call in the police; X Z, No. 5, is in the bar, taking tea with your mistress. Now brush.'

'And this place is—'

'In the land of mines and minerals,' said their host, 'about ten miles from ——. He works in metals on his own account. You have heard of a place called Hell-house Yard? well, he lives there; and his name is Simon.'

'And does he keep up any communication with his brother, think you?' said Gerard.

'Nay, I know no more, at least at present,' said their host. 'The secretary asked me about a person absent without leave for twenty years, and who was said to have no relations. I found you one, and a very near one. You are at the station, and you have got your ticket. The American gentleman's wiolent. Here's the police. I must take a high tone.' And with these words Chaffing Jack quitted them.

In the meantime we must not forget Dandy Mick and his two young friends, whom he had so generously offered to treat to the Temple.

'Well, what do you think of it?' asked Caroline of Harriet, in a whisper, as they entered the splendid apartment.

'It's just what I thought the Queen lived in,' said Harriet; 'but, indeed, I'm all of a flutter.'

'Well, don't look as if you were,' said her friend.

'Come along, gals,' said Mick; 'who's afraid? Here, we'll sit down at this table. Now what shall we have? Here, waiter; I say, waiter!'

'Yes, sir; yes, sir.'

'Well, why don't you come when I call?' said Mick, with a consequential air. 'I have been hallooing these ten minutes. Couple of glasses of bar-mixture for these ladies, and a go of gin for myself. And I say, waiter, stop, stop, don't be in such a deuced hurry; do you think folks can drink without eating? sausages for three; and, damme, take care they are not burnt.'

'Yes, sir; directly, directly.'

'That's the way to talk to these fellows,' said

Mick, with a self-satisfied air, and perfectly repaid by the admiring gaze of his companions.

'It's pretty, Miss Harriet,' said Mick, looking up at the ceiling with a careless, *nil admirari* glance.

'Oh! it is beautiful,' said Harriet.

'You never were here before; it's the only place. That's the Lady of the Lake,' he added, pointing to a picture; 'I've seen her at the Circus, with real water.'

The hissing sausages, crowning a pile of mashed potatoes, were placed before them; the delicate rummers of the Mowbray slap-bang for the girls; the more masculine pewter measure for their friend.

'Are the plates very hot?' said Mick.

'Very, sir.'

'Hot plates half the battle,' said Mick.

'Now, Caroline; here, Miss Harriet; don't take away your plate, wait for the mash; they mash their taters here very elegant.'

It was a happy and a merry party. Mick delighted to help his guests, and to drink their healths.

'Well,' said he, when the waiter had cleared away their plates, and left them to their less substantial luxuries — 'Well,' said Mick, sipping a renewed glass of gin-twist, and leaning back in his chair, 'say what they please, there's nothing like life.'

'At the Traffords',' said Caroline, 'the greatest fun we ever had was a singing-class.'

'I pity them poor devils in the country,' said Mick; 'we got some of them at Collinson's, come from Suffolk, they say; what they call hagricultural labourers; a very queer lot indeed.'

'Ah! them's the himmigrants,' said Caroline; 'they're sold out of slavery, and send down by Pick-

ford's van into the labour market to bring down our wages.'

'We'll teach them a trick or two before they do that,' urged Mick. 'Where are you, Miss Harriet?'

'I am at Wiggins and Webster's, sir.'

'Where they clean machinery during meal-time; that won't do,' said Mick. 'I see one of your partners coming in,' said Mick, making many signals to a person who soon joined them. 'Well, Devilsdust, how are you?'

This was the familiar appellation of a young gentleman who really had no other, baptismal or patrimonial. About a fortnight after his mother had introduced him into the world, she returned to her factory, and put her infant out to nurse; that is to say, paid threepence a week to an old woman, who takes charge of these new-born babes for the day, and gives them back at night to their mothers as they hurriedly return from the scene of their labour to the dungeon or the den, which is still by courtesy called 'home.' The expense is not great: laudanum and treacle, administered in the shape of some popular elixir, affords these innocents a brief taste of the sweets of existence, and, keeping them quiet, prepares them for the silence of their impending grave. Infanticide is practised as extensively and as legally in England as it is on the banks of the Ganges; a circumstance which apparently has not yet engaged the attention of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. But the vital principle is an impulse from an immortal Artist, and sometimes baffles, even in its tenderest phasis, the machinations of society for its extinction. There are infants that will defy even starvation and poison, unnatural

mothers and demon nurses. Such was the nameless one of whom we speak. We cannot say he thrived; but he would not die. So, at two years of age, his mother being lost sight of, and the weekly payment having ceased, he was sent out in the street to 'play,' in order to be run over. Even this expedient failed. The youngest and the feeblest of the band of victims, Juggernaut spared him to Moloch. All his companions were disposed of. Three months' 'play' in the streets got rid of this tender company, shoeless, half-naked, and uncombed, whose age varied from two to five years. Some were crushed, some were lost, some caught cold and fevers, crept back to their garret or their cellars, were dosed with Godfrey's cordial, and died in peace. The nameless one would not disappear. He always got out of the way of the carts and horses, and never lost his own. They gave him no food: he foraged for himself, and shared with the dogs the garbage of the streets. But still he lived; stunted and pale, he defied even the fatal fever which was the only habitant of his cellar that never quitted it. And slumbering at night on a bed of mouldering straw, his only protection against the plashy surface of his den, with a dung-heap at his head, and a cess-pool at his feet, he still clung to the only roof which shielded him from the tempest.

At length, when the nameless one had completed his fifth year, the pest which never quitted the nest of cellars of which he was a citizen, raged in the quarter with such intensity, that the extinction of its swarming population was menaced. The haunt of this child was peculiarly visited. All the children gradually sickened except himself; and one night when he returned home he found the old woman

herself dead, and surrounded only by corpses. The child before this had slept on the same bed of straw with a corpse, but then there were also breathing beings for his companions. A night passed only with corpses seemed to him in itself a kind of death. He stole out of the cellar, quitted the quarter of pestilence, and after much wandering lay down near the door of a factory. Fortune had guided him. Soon after break of day, he was awakened by the sound of the factory bell, and found assembled a crowd of men, women, and children. The door opened, they entered, the child accompanied them. The roll was called; his unauthorised appearance noticed; he was questioned; his acuteness excited attention. A child was wanting in the Wadding Hole, a place for the manufacture of waste and damaged cotton, the refuse of the mills, which is here worked up into counterpanes and coverlets. The nameless one was preferred to the vacant post, received even a salary, more than that, a name; for as he had none, he was christened on the spot Devilsdust.

Devilsdust had entered life so early that at seventeen he combined the experience of manhood with the divine energy of youth. He was a first-rate workman, and received high wages; he had availed himself of the advantages of the factory school; he soon learnt to read and write with facility, and at the moment of our history was the leading spirit of the Shoddy-court Literary and Scientific Institute. His great friend, his only intimate, was Dandy Mick. The apparent contrariety of their qualities and structure perhaps led to this. It is indeed the most assured basis of friendship. Devilsdust was dark and melancholy, ambitious and discontented, full of thought,

and with powers of patience and perseverance that alone amounted to genius. Mick was as brilliant as his complexion; gay, irritable, evanescent, and unstable. Mick enjoyed life; his friend only endured it; yet Mick was always complaining of the lowness of his wages, and the greatness of his toil; while Devilsdust never murmured, but read and pondered on the rights of labour, and sighed to vindicate his order.

'I have some thoughts of joining the Total Abstinence,' said Devilsdust; 'ever since I read Stephen Morley's address, it has been in my mind. We shall never get our rights till we leave off consuming excisable articles; and the best thing to begin with is liquors.'

'Well, I could do without liquors myself,' said Caroline. 'If I was a lady, I would never drink anything except fresh milk from the cow.'

'Tea for my money,' said Harriet; 'I must say there's nothing I grudge for good tea. Now I keep house, I mean always to drink the best.'

'Well, you have not yet taken the pledge, Dusty,' said Mick; 'and so suppose we order a go of gin, and talk this matter of temperance over.'

Devilsdust was manageable in little things, especially by Mick: he acceded, and seated himself at their table.

'I suppose you have heard this last dodge of Shuffle and Screw, Dusty?' said Mick.

'What's that?'

'Every man had his key given him this evening; half-a-crown a week round deducted from wages for rent. Jim Plastow told them he lodged with his father, and didn't want a house; upon which they said he must let it.'

'Their day will come,' said Devilsdust, thoughtfully. 'I really think that those Shuffles and Screws are worse even than Truck and Trett. You knew where you were with those fellows; it was five-and-twenty per cent. off wages, and very bad stuff for your money. But as for Shuffle and Screw, what with their fines and their keys, a man never knows what he has to spend. Come,' he added, filling his glass, 'let's have a toast: Confusion to Capital.'

'That's your sort,' said Mick. 'Come, Caroline; drink to your partner's toast, Miss Harriet. Money's the root of all evil, which nobody can deny. We'll have the rights of labour yet; the ten-hour bill, no fines, and no individuals admitted to any work who have not completed their sixteenth year.'

'No, fifteen,' said Caroline, eagerly.

'The people won't bear their grievances much longer,' said Devilsdust.

'I think one of the greatest grievances the people have,' said Caroline, 'is the beaks serving notice on Chaffing Jack to shut up the Temple on Sunday nights.'

'It is infamous,' said Mick; 'ayn't we to have no recreation? One might as well live in Suffolk, where the immigrants come from, and where they are obliged to burn ricks to pass the time.'

'As for the rights of labour,' said Harriet, 'the people goes for nothing with this machinery.'

'And you have opened your mouth to say a very sensible thing, Miss Harriet,' said Mick; 'but if I were Lord Paramount for eight-and-forty hours, I'd soon settle that question. Wouldn't I fire a broadside into their "double deckers"? The battle of Navarino at Mowbray fair, with fourteen squibs from the admiral's

ship going off at the same time, should be nothing to it.'

'Labour may be weak, but capital is weaker,' said Devilsdust. 'Their capital is all paper.'

'I tell you what,' said Mick, with a knowing look, and in a lowered tone, 'the only thing, my hearties, that can save this here nation is a ——— good strike.'

CHAPTER XVII.

Aubrey St. Lys.

'OUR lordship's dinner is served,' announced the groom of the chambers to Lord de Mowbray; and the noble lord led out Lady Marney. The rest followed. Egremont found himself seated next to Lady Maud Fitz-Warene, the younger daughter of the earl. Nearly opposite to him was Lady Joan.

The ladies Fitz-Warene were sandy girls, somewhat tall, with rather good figures, and a grand air; the elder ugly, the second rather pretty; and yet both very much alike. They both had great conversational powers, though in different ways. Lady Joan was doctrinal; Lady Maud inquisitive: the first often imparted information which you did not previously possess; the other suggested ideas which were often before in your own mind, but lay tranquil and unobserved till called into life and notice by her fanciful and vivacious tongue. Both of them were endowed with a remarkable self-possession; but Lady Joan wanted softness, and Lady Maud repose.

This was the result of the rapid observation of Egremont, who was, however, experienced in the

world and quick in his detection of manner and of character.

The dinner was stately, as becomes the high nobility. There were many guests, yet the table seemed only a gorgeous spot in the capacious chamber. The side tables were laden with silver vases and golden shields arranged on shelves of crimson velvet. The walls were covered with Fitz-Warenes, De Mowbrays, and De Veres. The attendants glided about without noise, and with the precision of military discipline. They watched your wants, they anticipated your wishes, and they supplied all you desired with a lofty air of pompous devotion.

'You came by the railroad?' inquired Lord de Mowbray mournfully, of Lady Marney.

'From Marham; about ten miles from us,' replied her ladyship.

'A great revolution!'

'Isn't it?'

'I fear it has a dangerous tendency to equality,' said his lordship, shaking his head: 'I suppose Lord Marney gives them all the opposition in his power.'

'There is nobody so violent against railroads as George,' said Lady Marney. 'I cannot tell you what he does not do! He organised the whole of our division against the Marham line!'

'I rather counted on him,' said Lord de Mowbray, 'to assist me in resisting this joint branch here; but I was surprised to learn he had consented.'

'Not until the compensation was settled,' innocently remarked Lady Marney; 'George never opposes them after that. He gave up all opposition to the Marham line when they agreed to his terms.'

'And yet,' said Lord de Mowbray, 'I think if Lord Marney would take a different view of the case, and look to the moral consequences, he would hesitate. Equality, Lady Marney, equality is not our *métier*. If we nobles do not make a stand against the levelling spirit of the age, I am at a loss to know who will fight the battle. You may depend upon it that these railroads are very dangerous things.'

'I have no doubt of it. I suppose you have heard of Lady Vanilla's trip from Birmingham? Have you not indeed? She came up with Lady Laura, and two of the most gentlemanlike men sitting opposite her; never met, she says, two more intelligent men. She begged one of them at Wolverhampton to change seats with her, and he was most politely willing to comply with her wishes, only it was necessary that his companion should move at the same time, for they were chained together! Two gentlemen, sent to town for picking a pocket at Shrewsbury races.'

'A countess and a felon! So much for public conveyances,' said Lord Mowbray. 'But Lady Vanilla is one of those who will talk with everybody.'

'She is very amusing, though,' said Lady Marney.

'I dare say she is,' said Lord de Mowbray; 'but believe me, my dear Lady Marney, in these times especially, a countess has something else to do than be amusing.'

'You think, as property has its duties as well as its rights, rank has its bores as well as its pleasures.'

Lord Mowbray mused.

'How do you do, Mr. Jermyn?' said a lively little lady with sparkling beady black eyes, and a yellow complexion, though with good features: 'when did you arrive in the north? I have been fighting your

battles finely since I saw you,' she added, shaking her head rather with an expression of admonition than of sympathy.

'You are always fighting one's battles, Lady Firebrace; it is very kind of you. If it were not for you, we should none of us know how much we are all abused,' replied Mr. Jermyn, a young M.P.

'They say you gave the most radical pledges,' said Lady Firebrace eagerly, and not without malice. 'I heard Lord Muddlebrains say that if he had had the least idea of your principles, you would not have had his influence.'

'Muddlebrains can't command a single vote,' said Mr. Jermyn. 'He is a political humbug, the greatest of all humbugs; a man who swaggers about London clubs and consults solemnly about his influence, and in the country is a nonentity.'

'Well, that can't be said of Lord Clarinel,' rejoined Lady Firebrace.

'And have you been defending me against Lord Clarinel's attacks?' inquired Mr. Jermyn.

'No; but I am going to Wemsbury, and then I have no doubt I shall have the opportunity.'

'I am going to Wemsbury myself,' said Mr. Jermyn.

'And what does Lord Clarinel think of your pledge about the pension list?' said Lady Firebrace, daunted but malignant.

'He never told me,' said Mr. Jermyn.

'I believe you did not pledge yourself to the ballot?' inquired Lady Firebrace with an affected air of inquisitiveness.

'It is a subject that requires some reflection,' said Mr. Jermyn. 'I must consult some profound politician

like Lady Firebrace. By-the-bye, you told my mother that the Conservatives would have a majority of fifteen. Do you think they will have so much?' said Mr. Jermyn with an innocent air, it now being notorious that the Whig administration had a majority of double that amount.

'I said Mr. Tadpole gave us a majority of fifteen,' said Lady Firebrace. 'I knew he was in error; because I had happened to see Lord Melbourne's own list, made up to the last hour; and which gave the government a majority of sixty. It was only shown to three members of the cabinet,' she added, in a tone of triumphant mystery.

Lady Firebrace, a great stateswoman among the Tories, was proud of an admirer who was a member of the Whig cabinet. She was rather an agreeable guest in a country house, with her extensive correspondence, and her bulletins from both sides. Tadpole, flattered by her notice, and charmed with female society that talked his own slang, and entered with affected enthusiasm into all his petty plots and barren machinations, was vigilant in his communications; while her Whig cavalier, an easy individual, who always made love by talking or writing politics, abandoned himself without reserve, and instructed Lady Firebrace regularly after every council. Taper looked grave at this connection between Tadpole and Lady Firebrace; and whenever an election was lost, or a division stuck in the mud, he gave the cue with a nod and monosyllable, and the Conservative pack that infests clubs, chattering on subjects of which it is impossible they can know anything, instantly began barking and yelping, denouncing traitors, and wondering how the leaders could be so led by the nose and

not see that which was flagrant to the whole world. If, on the other hand, the advantage seemed to go with the Carlton Club, or the opposition benches, then it was the Whig and Liberal hounds who howled and moaned, explaining everything by the indiscretion, infatuation, treason of Lord Viscount Masque, and appealing to the initiated world of idiots around them, whether any party could ever succeed, hampered by such men, and influenced by such means.

The best of the joke was, that all this time Lord Masque and Tadpole were two old foxes, neither of whom conveyed to Lady Firebrace a single circumstance but with the wish, intention, and malice aforethought, that it should be communicated to his rival.

'I must get you to interest Lord de Mowbray in our cause,' said Sir Vavasour Firebrace, in an insinuating voice, to his neighbour, Lady Joan; 'I have sent him a large packet of documents. You know, he is one of us; still one of us. Once a baronet, always a baronet. The dignity merges, but does not cease; and happy as I am to see one covered with high honours who is in every way so worthy of them, still I confess to you it is not so much as Earl de Mowbray that your worthy father interests me, as in his undoubted character and capacity of Sir Altamont Fitz-Warene, baronet.'

'You have the data on which you move, I suppose, well digested,' said Lady Joan, attentive, but not interested.

'The case is clear; so far as equity is concerned, irresistible; indeed the late king pledged himself to a certain point. But if you would do me the favour of reading our memorial.'

'The proposition is not one adapted to our present civilisation,' said Lady Joan. 'A baronetcy has become the distinction of the middle class; a physician, our physician for example, is a baronet; and I dare say, some of our tradesmen; brewers, or people of that class. An attempt to elevate them into an order of nobility, however inferior, would partake, in some degree, of the ridiculous.'

'And has the duke escaped his gout this year?' inquired Lord Marney of Lady de Mowbray.

'A slight touch; I never knew my father so well. I expect you will meet him here. We look for him daily.'

'I shall be delighted; I hope he will come to Marney in October. I keep the blue ribbon cover for him.'

'What you suggest is very just,' said Egremont to Lady Maud. 'If we only, in our own spheres, made the exertion, the general effect would be great. Marney Abbey, for instance, I believe one of the finest of our monastic remains, that indeed is not disputed, diminished yearly to repair barns; the cattle browsing in the nave; all this might be prevented. If my brother would not consent to preserve or to restore, still any member of the family, even I, without expense, only with a little zeal, as you say, might prevent mischief, might stop demolition at least.'

'If this movement in the church had only revived a taste for Christian architecture,' said Lady Maud, 'it would not have been barren, and it has done so much more! But I am surprised that old families can be so dead to our national art; so full of our ancestors, their exploits, their mind. Indeed you and I have no excuse for such indifference, Mr. Egremont.'

'And I do not think I shall ever again be justly accused of it,' replied Egremont, 'you plead its cause so effectively. But to tell you the truth, I have been thinking of late about these things; monasteries and so on; the influence of the old church system on the happiness and comfort of the people.'

'And on the tone of the nobles; do not you think so?' said Lady Maud. 'I know it is the fashion to deride the crusades, but do not you think they had their origin in a great impulse, and, in a certain sense, led to great results? Pardon me if I speak with emphasis, but I never can forget I am a daughter of the first Crusaders.'

'The tone of society is certainly lower than of yore,' said Egremont. 'It is easy to say we view the past through a fallacious medium. We have, however, ample evidence that men feel less deeply than of old, and act with less devotion. But how far is this occasioned by the modern position of our church? That is the question.'

'You must speak to Mr. St. Lys about that,' said Lady Maud. 'Do you know him?' she added in a lower tone.

'No; is he here?'

'Next to mamma.'

And, looking in that direction, on the left hand of Lady Mowbray, Egremont beheld a gentleman in the last year of his youth, if youth according to the scale of Hippocrates cease at thirty-five. He was distinguished by that beauty of the noble English blood, of which in these days few types remain; the Norman tempered by the Saxon; the fire of conquest softened by integrity; and a serene, though inflexible habit of mind. The chains of convention, an external life grown out

of all proportion with that of the heart and mind, have destroyed this dignified beauty. There is no longer in fact an aristocracy in England, for the superiority of the animal man is an essential quality of aristocracy. But that it once existed, any collection of portraits from the sixteenth century will show.

Aubrey St. Lys was a younger son of the most ancient Norman family in England. The Conqueror had given them the moderate estate on which they now lived, and which, in spite of so many civil conflicts and religious changes, they had handed down to each other, from generation to generation, for eight centuries. Aubrey St. Lys was the vicar of Mowbray. He had been the college tutor of the late Lord Fitz-Warene, whose mind he had formed, whose bright abilities he had cultivated, who adored him. To that connection he owed the slight preferment which he possessed, but which was all he desired. A bishopric would not have tempted him from his peculiar charge.

In the centre of the town of Mowbray, teeming with its toiling thousands, there rose a building which might vie with many of the cathedrals of our land. Beautiful its solemn towers, its sculptured western front; beautiful its columned aisles and lofty nave; its sparkling shrine and delicate chantry; most beautiful the streaming glories of its vast orient light!

This magnificent temple, built by the monks of Mowbray, and once connected with their famous house, of which not a trace now remained, had in time become the parish church of an obscure village, whose population could not have filled one of its side chapels. These strange vicissitudes of ecclesiastical buildings are not singular in the north of England.

Mowbray Church remained for centuries the wonder of passing peasants, and the glory of county histories. But there is a magic in the beautiful buildings which exercises an irresistible influence over the mind of man. One of the reasons urged for the destruction of the monasteries after the dispersion of their inhabitants, was the pernicious influence of their solemn and stately forms on the memories and imagination of those that beheld them. It was impossible to connect systematic crime with the creators of such divine fabrics. And so it was with Mowbray Church. When manufactures were introduced into this district, which abounded with all the qualities necessary for their successful pursuit, to Mowbray, offering equal though not superior advantages to other positions, was accorded the preference, 'because it possessed such a beautiful church.' The lingering genius of the monks of Mowbray hovered round the spot which they had adorned, and sanctified, and loved; and thus they had indirectly become the authors of its present greatness and prosperity.

Unhappily, for a long season the vicars of Mowbray had been little conscious of their mission. An immense population gathered round the sacred citadel and gradually spread on all sides of it for miles. But the parish church for a long time remained the only one at Mowbray when the population of the town exceeded that of some European capitals. And even in the parish church the frigid spell of Erastian self-complacency fatally prevailed. A scanty congregation gathered together for form, and as much influenced by party as higher sentiments. Going to church was held more genteel than going to meeting. The principal tradesmen of the neighbouring great houses

deemed it more 'aristocratic;' using a favourite and hackneyed epithet, which only expressed their own servility. About the time the Church Commission issued, the congregation of Mowbray was approaching zero. There was an idea afloat for a time of making it the seat of a new bishopric; the cathedral was ready; another instance of the influence of fine art. But there was no residence for the projected prelate, and a jobbing bishop on the commission was afraid that he might have to contribute to building one. So the idea died away; and the living having become vacant at this moment, instead of a bishop, Mowbray received an humble vicar in the shape of Aubrey St. Lys, who came among a hundred thousand heathen to preach 'the Unknown God.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Friend of the People.

'AND how do you find the people about you, Marney?' said Lord de Mowbray, seating himself on a sofa by his guest.

'All very well, my lord,' replied the earl, who ever treated Lord de Mowbray with a certain degree of ceremony, especially when the descendant of the Crusaders affected the familiar. There was something of a Puck-like malignity in the temperament of Lord Marney, which exhibited itself in a remarkable talent for mortifying persons in a small way: by a gesture, an expression, a look, cloaked, too, very often with all the character of profound deference. The old nobility of Spain delighted to address each other only by their names, when in the presence of a spic-and-span grandee; calling each other, 'Infantado,' 'Sidonia,' 'Ossuna,' and then turning round with the most distinguished consideration, and appealing to the Most Noble Marquis of Ensenada.

'They begin to get a little uneasy here,' said Lord de Mowbray.

'We have nothing to complain of,' said Lord Marney. 'We continue reducing the rates, and as

long as we do that the country must improve. The workhouse test tells. We had the other day a case of incendiarism, which frightened some people; but I inquired into it, and am quite satisfied it originated in purely accidental circumstances; at least nothing to do with wages. I ought to be a judge, for it was on my own property.'

'And what is the rate of wages in your part of the world, Lord Marney?' enquired Mr. St. Lys, who was standing by.

'Oh! good enough: not like your manufacturing districts; but people who work in the open air instead of a furnace can't expect, and don't require such. They get their eight shillings a week; at least generally.'

'Eight shillings a week!' said Mr. St. Lys. 'Can a labouring man with a family, perhaps of eight children, live on eight shillings a week?'

'Oh! as for that,' said Lord Marney, 'they get more than that, because there is beer-money allowed, at least to a great extent among us, though I for one do not approve of the practice, and that makes nearly a shilling per week additional; and then some of them have potato grounds, though I am entirely opposed to that system.'

'And yet,' said Mr. St. Lys, 'how they contrive to live is to me marvellous.'

'Oh! as for that,' said Lord Marney, 'I have generally found the higher the wages the worse the workman. They only spend their money in the beer-shops. *They* are the curse of this country.'

'But what is a poor man to do,' said Mr. St. Lys, 'after his day's work, if he return to his own roof and find no home; his fire extinguished, his food

unprepared; the partner of his life, wearied with labour in the field or the factory, still absent, or perhaps in bed from exhaustion, or because she has returned wet to the skin, and has no change of raiment for her relief? We have removed woman from her sphere; we may have reduced wages by her introduction into the market of labour; but under these circumstances what we call domestic life is a condition impossible to be realised for the people of this country; and we must not therefore be surprised that they seek solace or rather refuge in the beer-shop.'

Lord Marney looked up at Mr. St. Lys with a stare of high-bred impertinence, and then carelessly observed, without directing his words to him, 'They may say what they like, but it is all an affair of population.'

'I would rather believe that it is an affair of resources,' said Mr. St. Lys; 'not what is the amount of our population, but what is the amount of our resources for their maintenance.'

'It comes to the same thing,' said Lord Marney. 'Nothing can put this country right but emigration on a great scale; and as the government do not choose to undertake it, I have commenced it for my own defence on a small scale. I will take care that the population of my parishes is not increased. I build no cottages, and I destroy all I can; and I am not ashamed or afraid to say so.'

'You have declared war to the cottage, then,' said Mr. St. Lys, smiling. 'It is not at the first sound so startling a cry as war to the castle.'

'But you think it may lead to it?' said Lord de Mowbray.

'I love not to be a prophet of evil,' said Mr. St. Lys.

Lord Marney rose from his seat and addressed Lady Firebrace, whose husband in another part of the room had caught Mr. Jermyn, and was opening his mind on 'the question of the day;' Lady Maud, followed by Egremont, approached Mr. St. Lys, and said, 'Mr. Egremont has a great feeling for Christian architecture, Mr. St. Lys, and wishes particularly to visit our church, of which we are so proud.' And in a few moments they were seated together, and engaged in conversation.

Lord de Mowbray placed himself by the side of Lady Marney, who was seated by his countess.

'Oh! how I envy you at Marney!' he exclaimed. 'No manufactures, no smoke; living in the midst of a beautiful park, and surrounded by a contented peasantry!'

'It is very delightful,' said Lady Marney, 'but then we are so dull; we have really no neighbourhood.'

'I think that such an advantage,' said Lady de Mowbray; 'I must say I like my friends from London. I never know what to say to the people here. Excellent people, the very best people in the world; the way they behaved to poor dear Fitz-Warene, when they wanted him to stand for the county, I never can forget; but then they do not know the people we know, or do the things we do; and when you have gone through the routine of county questions, and exhausted the weather and all the winds, I am positively, my dear Lady Marney, *aux abois,* and then they think you are proud, when really one is only stupid.'

'I am fond of work,' said Lady Marney, 'and I talk to them always about it.'

'Ah! you are fortunate, I never could work; and Joan and Maud, they neither of them work. Maud did embroider a banner once for her brother; it is in the hall. I think it beautiful: but somehow or other she never cultivated her talent.'

'For all that has occurred, or may occur,' said Mr. St. Lys to Egremont, 'I blame only the Church. The Church deserted the people; and from that moment the Church has been in danger, and the people degraded. Formerly religion undertook to satisfy the noble wants of human nature, and by its festivals relieved the painful weariness of toil. The day of rest was consecrated, if not always to elevated thoughts, at least to sweet and noble sentiments. The Church convened to its solemnities, under its splendid and almost celestial roofs, amid the finest monuments of art that human hands have raised, the whole Christian population; for there, in the presence of God, all were brethren. It shared equally among all its prayer, its incense, and its music, its sacred instructions, and the highest enjoyments that the arts could afford.'

'You believe, then, in the efficacy of forms and ceremonies?'

'What you call forms and ceremonies represent the divinest instincts of our nature. Push your aversion to forms and ceremonies to a legitimate conclusion, and you would prefer kneeling in a barn rather than in a cathedral. Your tenets would strike at the very existence of all art, which is essentially spiritual.'

'I am not speaking abstractedly,' said Egremont, 'but rather with reference to the indirect connection of these forms and ceremonies with another church.

The people of this country associate them with an enthralling superstition and a foreign dominion.'

'With Rome,' said Mr. St. Lys; 'yet forms and ceremonies existed before Rome.'

'But practically,' said Egremont, 'has not their revival in our service at the present day a tendency to restore the Romish system in this country?'

'It is difficult to ascertain what may be the practical effect of certain circumstances among the uninformed,' said Mr. St. Lys. 'The Church of Rome is to be respected as the only Hebræo-Christian Church extant; all other churches established by the Hebrew apostles have disappeared, but Rome remains; and we must never permit the exaggerated position which it assumed in the middle centuries to make us forget its early and apostolical character, when it was fresh from Palestine, and as it were fragrant from Paradise. The Church of Rome is sustained by apostolical succession; but apostolical succession is not an institution complete in itself; it is a part of a whole; if it be not part of a whole it has no foundation. The apostles succeeded the prophets. Our Master announced himself as the last of the prophets. They in their turn were the heirs of the patriarchs: men who were in direct communication with the Most High. To men not less favoured than the apostles, the revelation of the priestly character was made, and those forms and ceremonies ordained which the Church of Rome has never relinquished. But Rome did not invent them: upon their practice, the duty of all congregations, we cannot consent to her founding a claim to supremacy. For would you maintain then that the Church did not exist in the time of the prophets? Was Moses then not a churchman? And Aaron,

was he not a high priest? Ay! greater than any pope or prelate, whether he be at Rome or at Lambeth.

'In all these Church discussions, we are apt to forget that the second Testament is avowedly only a supplement. Jehovah-Jesus came to complete the "law and the prophets." Christianity is completed Judaism, or it is nothing. Christianity is incomprehensible without Judaism, as Judaism is incomplete without Christianity. What has Rome to do with its completion; what with its commencement? The law was not thundered forth from the Capitolian mount; the Divine Atonement was not fulfilled upon Mons Sacer. No; the order of our priesthood comes directly from Jehovah; and the forms and ceremonies of His Church are the regulations of His supreme intelligence. Rome indeed boasts that the authenticity of the second Testament depends upon the recognition of her infallibility. The authenticity of the second Testament depends upon its congruity with the first. Did Rome preserve that? I recognise in the Church an institution thoroughly, sincerely catholic: adapted to all climes, and to all ages. I do not bow to the necessity of a visible head in a defined locality; but were I to seek for such, it would not be at Rome. I cannot discover in its history, however memorable, any testimony of a mission so sublime. When Omnipotence deigned to be incarnate, the Ineffable Word did not select a Roman frame. The prophets were not Romans; the apostles were not Romans; she who was blessed above all women, I never heard she was a Roman maiden. No, I should look to a land more distant than Italy, to a city more sacred even than Rome.'

CHAPTER XIX.

A Herald of the Dawn.

IT WAS a cloudy, glimmering dawn. A cold withering east wind blew through the silent streets of Mowbray. The sounds of the night had died away, the voices of the day had not commenced. There reigned a stillness complete and absorbing.

Suddenly there is a voice, there is a movement. The first footstep of the new week of toil is heard. A man muffled up in a thick coat, and bearing in his hand what would seem at the first glance to be a shepherd's crook, only its handle is much longer, appears upon the pavement. He touches a number of windows with great quickness as he moves rapidly along. A rattling noise sounds upon each pane. The use of the long handle of his instrument becomes apparent as he proceeds, enabling him as it does to reach the upper windows of the dwellings whose inmates he has to rouse. Those inmates are the factory girls, who subscribe in districts to engage these heralds of the dawn; and by a strict observance of whose citation they can alone escape the dreaded fine that awaits those who have not arrived at the door of the factory before the bell ceases to sound.

The sentry in question, quitting the streets, and stooping through one of the small archways that we have before noticed, entered a court. Here lodged a multitude of his employers; and the long crook, as it were by some sleight of hand, seemed sounding on both sides, and at many windows at the same moment. Arrived at the end of the court, he was about to touch the window of the upper story of the last tenement, when that window opened, and a man, pale and careworn, and, in a melancholy voice, spoke to him.

'Simmons,' said the man, 'you need not rouse this story any more; my daughter has left us.'

'Has she left Webster's?'

'No; but she has left us. She has long murmured at her hard lot; working like a slave, and not for herself. And she has gone, as they all go, to keep house for herself.'

'That's a bad business,' said the watchman, in a tone not devoid of sympathy.

'Almost as bad as for parents to live on their children's wages,' replied the man mournfully.

'And how is your good woman?'

'As poorly as needs be. Harriet has never been home since Friday night. She owes you nothing?'

'Not a halfpenny. She was as regular as a little bee, and always paid every Monday morning. I am sorry she has left you, neighbour.'

'The Lord's will be done. It's hard times for such as us,' said the man; and, leaving the window open, he retired into his room.

It was a single chamber of which he was the tenant. In the centre, placed so as to gain the best light which the gloomy situation could afford, was a

loom. In two corners of the room were mattresses placed on the floor, a check curtain, hung upon a string, if necessary, concealing them. On one was his sick wife; on the other, three young children: two girls, the eldest about eight years of age; between them their baby brother. An iron kettle was by the hearth, and on the mantelpiece some candles, a few lucifer matches, two tin mugs, a paper of salt, and an iron spoon. In a farther part, close to the wall, was a heavy table or dresser; this was a fixture, as well as the form which was fastened by it.

The man seated himself at his loom; he commenced his daily task.

'Twelve hours of daily labour, at the rate of one penny each hour; and even this labour is mortgaged! How is this to end? Is it rather not ended?' And he looked around him at his chamber without resources: no food, no fuel, no furniture, and four human beings dependent on him, and lying in their wretched beds, because they had no clothes. 'I cannot sell my loom,' he continued, 'at the price of old firewood, and it cost me gold. It is not vice that has brought me to this, nor indolence, nor imprudence. I was born to labour, and I was ready to labour. I loved my loom, and my loom loved me. It gave me a cottage in my native village, surrounded by a garden, of whose claims on my solicitude it was not jealous. There was time for both. It gave me for a wife the maiden that I had ever loved; and it gathered my children round my hearth with plenteousness and peace. I was content: I sought no other lot. It is not adversity that makes me look back upon the past with tenderness.

'Then why am I here? Why am I, and six

hundred thousand subjects of the Queen, honest, loyal, and industrious, why are we, after manfully struggling for years, and each year sinking lower in the scale, why are we driven from our innocent and happy homes, our country cottages that we loved, first to bide in close towns without comforts, and gradually to crouch into cellars, or find a squalid lair like this, without even the common necessaries of existence; first the ordinary conveniences of life, then raiment, and at length food, vanishing from us?

'It is that the capitalist has found a slave that has supplanted the labour and ingenuity of man. Once he was an artisan: at the best, he now only watches machines; and even that occupation slips from his grasp to the woman and the child. The capitalist flourishes, he amasses immense wealth; we sink, lower and lower; lower than the beasts of burthen, for they are fed better than we are, cared for more. And it is just, for according to the present system they are more precious. And yet they tell us that the interests of capital and of labour are identical.

'If a society that has been created by labour suddenly becomes independent of it, that society is bound to maintain the race whose only property is labour, out of the proceeds of that other property, which has not ceased to be productive.

'When the class of the nobility were supplanted in France, they did not amount in number to one-third of us hand-loom weavers; yet all Europe went to war to avenge their wrongs, every state subscribed to maintain them in their adversity, and when they were restored to their own country their own land supplied them with an immense indemnity. Who cares for us? Yet we have lost our estates. Who

raises a voice for us? Yet we are at least as innocent as the nobility of France. We sink among no sighs except our own. And if they give us sympathy, what then? Sympathy is the solace of the poor; but for the rich there is compensation.'

'Is that Harriet?' said his wife, moving in her bed.

The hand-loom weaver was recalled from his reverie to the urgent misery that surrounded him.

'No!' he replied in a quick hoarse voice, 'it is not Harriet.'

'Why does not Harriet come?'

'She will come no more!' replied the weaver; 'I told you so last night: she can bear this place no longer; and I am not surprised.'

'How are we to get food, then?' rejoined his wife; 'you ought not to have let her leave us. You do nothing, Warner. You get no wages yourself; and you have let the girl escape.'

'I will escape myself if you say that again,' said the weaver: 'I have been up these three hours finishing this piece, which ought to have been taken home on Saturday night.'

'But you have been paid for it beforehand. You get nothing for your work. A penny an hour! What sort of work is it that brings a penny an hour?'

'Work that you have often admired, Mary, and has before this gained a prize. But if you don't like the work,' said the man, quitting his loom, 'let it alone. There was enough yet owing on this piece to have allowed us to break our fast. However, no matter; we must starve sooner or later. Let us begin at once.'

'No, no, Philip! work. Let us break our fast, come what may.'

'Twit me no more, then,' said the weaver, resuming his seat, 'or I throw the shuttle for the last time.'

'I will not taunt you,' said his wife in a kinder tone. 'I was wrong; I am sorry; but I am very ill. It is not for myself I speak; I want not to eat; I have no appetite; my lips are so very parched. But the children, the children went supperless to bed, and they will wake soon.'

'Mother, we ayn't asleep,' said the elder girl.

'No, we ayn't asleep, mother,' said her sister; 'we heard all that you said to father.'

'And baby?'

'He sleeps still.'

'I shiver very much!' said the mother. 'It's a cold day. Pray shut the window, Warner. I see the drops upon the pane; it is raining. I wonder if the persons below would lend us one block of coal.'

'We have borrowed too often,' said Warner.

'I wish there were no such thing as coal in the land,' said his wife, 'and then the engines would not be able to work; and we should have our rights again.'

'Amen!' said Warner.

'Don't you think, Warner,' said his wife, 'that you could sell that piece to some other person, and owe Barber for the money he advanced?'

'No!' said her husband, fiercely. 'I'll go straight.'

'And let your children starve,' said his wife, 'when you could get five or six shillings at once. But so it always was with you. Why did not you go to the machines years ago like other men, and so get used to them?'

'I should have been supplanted by this time,' said Warner, 'by a girl or a woman! It would have been just as bad!'

'Why, there was your friend, Walter Gerard; he was the same as you, and yet now he gets two pound a week; at least I have often heard you say so.'

'Walter Gerard is a man of great parts,' said Warner, 'and might have been a master himself by this time had he cared.'

'And why did he not?'

'He had no wife and children,' said Warner; 'he was not so blessed.'

The baby woke and began to cry.

'Ah! my child!' exclaimed the mother. 'That wicked Harriet! Here, Amelia, I have a morsel of crust here. I saved it yesterday for baby; moisten it in water, and tie it up in this piece of calico: he will suck it; it will keep him quiet; I can bear anything but his cry.'

'I shall have finished my job by noon,' said Warner; 'and then, please God, we shall break our fast.'

'It is yet two hours to noon,' said his wife. 'And Barber always keeps you so long! I cannot bear that Barber: I dare say he will not advance you money again, as you did not bring the job home on Saturday night. If I were you, Philip, I would go and sell the piece unfinished at once to one of the cheap shops.'

'I have gone straight all my life,' said Warner.

'And much good it has done you,' said his wife.

'My poor Amelia! How she shivers! I think the sun never touches this house. It is, indeed, a most wretched place.'

'It will not annoy you long, Mary,' said her husband: 'I can pay no more rent; and I only wonder they have not been here already to take the week.'

'And where are we to go?' said the wife.

'To a place which certainly the sun never touches,' said her husband, with a kind of malice in his misery —'to a cellar.'

'Oh! why was I ever born?' exclaimed his wife. 'And yet I was so happy once! And it is not our fault. I cannot make it out, Warner, why you should not get two pounds a week like Walter Gerard.'

'Bah!' said the husband.

'You said he had no family,' continued his wife. 'I thought he had a daughter.'

'But she is no burthen to him. The sister of Mr. Trafford is the Superior of the convent here, and she took Sybil when her mother died, and brought her up.'

'Oh! then she is a nun?'

'Not yet; but I dare say it will end in it.'

'Well, I think I would even sooner starve,' said his wife, 'than my children should be nuns.'

At this moment there was a knocking at the door. Warner descended from his loom, and opened it.

'Lives Philip Warner here?' enquired a clear voice of peculiar sweetness.

'My name is Warner.'

'I come from Walter Gerard,' continued the voice. 'Your letter reached him only last night. The girl at whose house your daughter left it has quitted this week past Mr. Trafford's factory.'

'Pray enter.'

And there entered Sybil.

CHAPTER XX.

An Angel of Mercy.

'YOUR wife is ill?' said Sybil.

'Very!' replied Warner's wife. 'Our daughter has behaved infamously to us. She has quitted us without saying by your leave or with your leave. And her wages were almost the only thing left to us; for Philip is not like Walter Gerard, you see: he cannot earn two pounds a week, though why he cannot I never could understand.'

'Hush, hush, wife!' said Warner. 'I speak, I apprehend, to Gerard's daughter?'

'Just so.'

'Ah! this is good and kind; this is like old times, for Walter Gerard was my friend, when I was not exactly as I am now.'

'He tells me so: he sent a messenger to me last night to visit you this morning. Your letter reached him only yesterday.'

'Harriet was to give it to Caroline,' said the wife. 'That's the girl who has done all the mischief and inveigled her away. And she has left Trafford's works, has she? Then I will be bound she and Harriet are keeping house together.'

'You suffer?' said Sybil, moving to the bedside of the woman. 'Give me your hand,' she added in a soft sweet tone. ''Tis hot.'

'I feel very cold,' said the woman. 'Warner would have the window open, till the rain came in.'

'And you, I fear, are wet,' said Warner, addressing Sybil, and interrupting his wife.

'Very slightly. And you have no fire. Ah! I have brought some things for you, but not fuel.'

'If he would only ask the person down stairs,' said his wife, 'for a block of coal; I tell him, neighbours could hardly refuse; but he never will do anything; he says he has asked too often.'

'I will ask,' said Sybil. 'But first, I have a companion without,' she added, 'who bears a basket for you. Come in, Harold.'

The baby began to cry the moment a large dog entered the room; a young bloodhound of the ancient breed, such as are now found but in a few old halls and granges in the north of England. Sybil untied the basket, and gave a piece of sugar to the screaming infant. Her glance was sweeter even than her remedy; the infant stared at her with his large blue eyes, for an instant astonished, and then he smiled.

'Oh! beautiful child!' exclaimed Sybil; and she took the babe up from the mattress and embraced it.

'You are an angel from heaven,' exclaimed the mother, 'and you may well say beautiful. And only to think of that infamous girl, Harriet, to desert us all in this way!'

Sybil drew forth the contents of the convent basket, and called Warner's attention to them. 'Now,' she said, 'arrange all this as I tell you, and I will go down

stairs and speak to them below as you wish. Harold, rest there;' and the dog laid himself down in the remotest corner.

'And is that Gerard's daughter?' said the weaver's wife.

'Only think what it is to gain two pounds a week, and bring up your daughters in that way, instead of such shameless hussies as our Harriet! But with such wages one can do anything. What have you there, Warner? Is that tea? Oh! I should like some tea. I do think tea would do me some good. I have quite a longing for it. Run down, Warner, and ask them to let us have a kettle of hot water. It is better than all the fire in the world. Amelia, my dear, do you see what they have sent us? Plenty to eat. Tell Maria all about it. You are good girls; you will never be like that infamous Harriet. When you earn wages you will give them to your poor mother and baby, won't you?'

'Yes, mother,' said Amelia.

'And father, too,' said Maria.

'And father, too,' said the wife. 'He has been a very good father to you all; and I never can understand why one who works so hard should earn so little; but I believe it is the fault of those machines. The police ought to put them down, and then everybody would be comfortable.'

Sybil and Warner re-entered; the fire was lit, the tea made, the meal partaken of. An air of comfort, even of enjoyment, was diffused over this chamber, but a few minutes back so desolate and unhappy.

'Well,' said the wife, raising herself a little up in her bed, 'I feel as if that dish of tea had saved my life. Amelia, have you had any tea? And Maria?

You see what it is to be good, girls; the Lord will never desert you. The day is fast coming when that Harriet will know what the want of a dish of tea is, with all her fine wages. And I am sure,' she added, addressing Sybil, 'what we all owe to you is not to be told. Your father well deserves his good fortune, with such a daughter.'

'My father's fortunes are not much better than his neighbours',' said Sybil, 'but his wants are few; and who should sympathise with the poor but the poor? Alas! none else can. Besides, it is the Superior of our convent that has sent you this meal. What my father can do for you I have told your husband. 'Tis little; but with the favour of Heaven it may avail. When the people support the people, the Divine blessing will not be wanting.'

'I am sure the Divine blessing will never be wanting to you,' said Warner, in a voice of emotion.

There was silence; the querulous spirit of the wife was subdued by the tone of Sybil; she revolved in her mind the present and the past; the children pursued their ungrudged and unusual meal; the daughter of Gerard, that she might not interfere with their occupation, walked to the window and surveyed the chink of troubled sky which was visible in the court. The wind blew in gusts; the rain beat against the glass. Soon after this, there was another knock at the door. Harold started from his repose, and growled. Warner rose, and saying, 'They have come for the rent. Thank God, I am ready,' advanced and opened the door. Two men offered with courtesy to enter.

'We are strangers,' said he who took the lead, 'but would not be such. I speak to Warner?'

'My name.'

'And I am your spiritual pastor, if to be the vicar of Mowbray entitles me to that description.'

'Mr. St. Lys.'

'The same. One of the most valued of my flock, and the most influential person in this district, has been speaking much of you to me this morning. You are working for him. He did not hear of you on Saturday night; he feared you were ill. Mr. Barber spoke to me of your distress, as well as of your good character. I came to express to you my respect and my sympathy, and to offer you my assistance.'

'You are most good, sir, and Mr. Barber too; and indeed, an hour ago, we were in as great straits—'

'And are now, sir,' exclaimed his wife, interrupting him. 'I have been in this bed a week, and may never rise from it again; the children have no clothes; they are pawned; everything is pawned; this morning we had neither fuel nor food. And we thought you had come for the rent, which we cannot pay. If it had not been for a dish of tea which was charitably given me this morning by a person almost as poor as ourselves,—that is to say, they live by labour, though their wages are much higher, as high as two pounds a week, though how that can be I never shall understand, when my husband is working twelve hours a day, and gaining only a penny an hour—if it had not been for this I should have been a corpse; and yet he says we were in straits, merely because Walter Gerard's daughter, who I willingly grant is an angel from heaven for all the good she has done us, has stepped in to our aid. But the poor supporting the poor, as she well says, what good can come from that?'

During this ebullition, Mr. St. Lys had surveyed the apartment and recognised Sybil.

'Sister,' he said, when the wife of Warner had ceased, 'this is not the first time we have met under the roof of sorrow.'

Sybil bent in silence, and moved as if she were about to retire; the wind and rain came dashing against the window. The companion of Mr. St. Lys, who was clad in a rough great-coat, and was shaking the wet off an oilskin hat known by the name of a 'south-wester,' advanced and said to her, 'It is but a squall, but a severe one; I would recommend you to stay for a few minutes.'

She received this remark with courtesy, but did not reply.

'I think,' continued the companion of Mr. St. Lys, 'that this is not the first time also that we have met?'

'I cannot recall our meeting before,' said Sybil.

'And yet it was not many days past; though the sky was so different, that it would almost make one believe it was in another land and another clime.'

Sybil looked at him as if for explanation.

'It was at Marney Abbey,' said the companion of Mr. St. Lys.

'I was there; and I remember when about to rejoin my companions, they were not alone.'

'And you disappeared, very suddenly I thought; for I left the ruins almost at the same moment as your friends, yet I never saw any of you again.'

'We took our course; a very rugged one; you perhaps pursued a more even way.'

'Was it your first visit to Marney?'

'My first and my last. There was no place I more desired to see; no place of which the vision made me so sad.'

'The glory has departed,' said Egremont, mournfully.

'It is not that,' said Sybil; 'I was prepared for decay, but not for such absolute desecration. The Abbey seems a quarry for materials to repair farmhouses; and the nave a cattle gate. What people they must be—that family of sacrilege who hold these lands!'

'Hem!' said Egremont. 'They certainly do not appear to have much feeling for ecclesiastical art.'

'And for little else, as we were told,' said Sybil. 'There was a fire at the Abbey farm the day we were there, and, from all that reached us, it would appear the people were as little tended as the Abbey walls.'

'They have some difficulty perhaps in employing their population in those parts.'

'You know the country?'

'Not at all; I was travelling in the neighbourhood, and made a diversion for the sake of seeing an Abbey of which I had heard so much.'

'Yes; it was the greatest of the Northern Houses. But they told me the people were most wretched round the Abbey; nor do I think there is any other cause for their misery, than the hard hearts of the family that have got the lands.'

'You feel deeply for the people!' said Egremont, looking at her earnestly.

Sybil returned him a glance expressive of some astonishment, and then said, 'And do not you? Your presence here assures me of it.'

'I humbly follow one who would comfort the unhappy.'

'The charity of Mr. St. Lys is known to all.'

'And you — you, too, are a ministering angel.'

'There is no merit in my conduct, for there is no sacrifice. When I remember what this English people once was; the truest, the freest, and the bravest, the best-natured and the best-looking, the happiest and most religious race upon the surface of this globe; and think of them now, with all their crimes and all their slavish sufferings, their soured spirits and their stunted forms; their lives without enjoyment, and their deaths without hope, I may well feel for them, even if I were not the daughter of their blood.'

And that blood mantled to her cheek as she ceased to speak, and her dark eye gleamed with emotion, and an expression of pride and courage hovered on her brow. Egremont caught her glance and withdrew his own; his heart was troubled.

St. Lys, who had been in conference with the weaver, left him and went to the bedside of his wife. Warner advanced to Sybil, and expressed his feelings for her father, his sense of her goodness. She, observing that the squall seemed to have ceased, bade him farewell, and calling Harold, quitted the chamber.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Noble Duke.

'HERE have you been all the morning, Charles?' said Lord Marney, coming into his brother's dressing-room a few minutes before dinner: 'Arabella had made the nicest little riding party for you and Lady Joan, and you were to be found nowhere. If you go on in this way, there is no use in having affectionate relations, or anything else.'

'I have been walking about Mowbray. One should see a factory once in one's life.'

'I don't see the necessity,' said Lord Marney; 'I never saw one, and never intend. Though, to be sure, when I hear the rents that Mowbray gets for his land in this neighbourhood, I must say I wish the worsted works had answered at Marney. And if it had not been for our poor dear father, they would.'

'Our family have always been against manufactories, railroads — everything,' said Egremont.

'Railroads are very good things, with high compensation,' said Lord Marney; 'and manufactories not so bad, with high rents; but, after all, these are enterprises for the *canaille*, and I hate them in my heart.'

'But they employ the people, George.'

'The people do not want employment; it is the greatest mistake in the world; all this employment is a stimulus to population. Never mind that; what I came in for is, to tell you that both Arabella and myself think you talk too much to Lady Maud.'

'I like her the best.'

'What has that to do with it, my dear fellow? Business is business. Old Mowbray will make an elder son out of his elder daughter. The affair is settled; I know it from the best authority. Talking to Lady Maud is insanity. It is all the same for her as if Fitz-Warene had never died. And then that great event, which ought to be the foundation of your fortune, would be perfectly thrown away. Lady Maud, at the best, is nothing more than twenty thousand pounds and a fat living. Besides, she is engaged to that parson fellow, St. Lys.'

'St. Lys told me to-day that nothing would ever induce him to marry. He would practise celibacy, though he would not enjoin it.'

'Enjoin fiddle-stick! How came you to be talking to such a sanctified impostor; and, I believe, with all his fine phrases, a complete radical? I tell you what, Charles, you must really make way with Lady Joan. The grandfather has come to-day, the old duke. Quite a family party. It looks so well. Never was such a golden opportunity. And you must be sharp too. That little Jermyn, with his brown eyes and his white hands, has not come down here, in the month of August, with no sport of any kind, for nothing.'

'I shall set Lady Firebrace at him.'

'She is quite your friend, and a very sensible woman too, Charles, and an ally not to be despised.

Lady Joan has a high opinion of her. There's the bell. Well, I shall tell Arabella that you mean to put up the steam, and Lady Firebrace shall keep Jermyn off. And perhaps it is as well you did not seem too eager at first. Mowbray Castle, my dear fellow, in spite of its manufactories, is not to be despised. And with a little firmness, you could keep the people out of your park. Mowbray could do it, only he has no pluck. He is afraid people would say he was the son of a footman.'

The duke, who was the father of the Countess de Mowbray, was also lord-lieutenant of the county. Although advanced in years, he was still extremely handsome, with the most winning manners; full of amenity and grace. He had been a *roué* in his youth, but seemed now the perfect representative of a benignant and virtuous old age. He was universally popular; admired by young men, adored by young ladies. Lord de Mowbray paid him the most distinguished consideration. It was genuine. However maliciously the origin of his own father might be represented, nobody could deprive him of that great fact, his father-in-law; a duke, a duke of a great house who had intermarried for generations with great houses, one of the old nobility, and something even loftier.

The county of which his Grace was lord-lieutenant was proud of its nobility; and certainly with Marney Abbey at one end, and Mowbray Castle at the other, it had just cause; but both these illustrious houses yielded in importance, though not in possessions, to the great peer who was the governor of the province.

A French actress, clever as French actresses always are, had persuaded, once upon a time, an easy-tem-

pered monarch of this realm, that the paternity of her coming babe was a distinction of which his Majesty might be proud. His Majesty did not much believe her; but he was a sensible man, and never disputed a point with a woman; so when the babe was born, and it proved a boy, he christened him with his name; and elevated him to the peerage in his cradle by the title of Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine and Marquis of Gascony.

An estate the royal father could not endow him with, for he had spent all his money, mortgaged all his resources, and was obliged to run in debt himself for the jewels of the rest of his mistresses; but he did his best for the young peer, as became an affectionate father or a fond lover. His Majesty made him, when he arrived at man's estate, the hereditary keeper of a palace which he possessed in the north of England; and this secured his Grace a castle and a park. He could wave his flag and kill his deer; and if he had only possessed an estate, he would have been as well off as if he had helped to conquer the realm with King William, or plundered the Church for King Harry. A revenue must, however, be found for the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, and it was furnished without the interference of Parliament, but with a financial dexterity worthy of that assembly, to whom and not to our sovereigns we are obliged for the public debt. The king granted the duke and his heirs for ever a pension on the post-office, a light tax upon coals shipped to London, and a tithe of all the shrimps caught on the southern coast. This last source of revenue became in time, with the development of watering-places, extremely prolific. And so, what with the foreign courts and colonies for the younger sons, it was thus contrived very respectably

to maintain the hereditary dignity of this great peer.

The present Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine had supported the Reform Bill, but had been shocked by the appropriation clause; very much admired Lord Stanley, and was apt to observe that, if that nobleman had been the leader of the Conservative party, he hardly knew what he might not have done himself. But the duke was an old Whig, had lived with old Whigs all his life, feared revolution, but still more the necessity of taking his name out of Brooks's, where he had looked in every day or night since he came of age. So, not approving of what was going on, yet not caring to desert his friends, he withdrew, as the phrase runs, from public life; that is to say, was rarely in his seat; did not continue to Lord Melbourne the proxy that had been entrusted to Lord Grey; and made Tory magistrates in his county, though a Whig lord-lieutenant.

When forces were numbered, and speculations on the future indulged in by the Tadpoles and Tapers, the name of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine was mentioned with a knowing look, and in a mysterious tone. Nothing more was necessary between Tadpole and Taper; but, if some hack *in statu pupillari* happened to be present at the conference, and the gentle novice, greedy for party tattle, and full of admiring reverence for the two great hierophants of petty mysteries before him, ventured to intimate his anxiety for initiation, the secret was entrusted to him, 'that all was right there; that his Grace only watched his opportunity; that he was heartily sick of the present men; indeed, would have gone over with Lord Stanley in 1835, had he not had a fit of the gout, which prevented him from coming up from the north; and though, to

be sure, his son and brother did vote against the Speaker, still that was a mistake; if a letter had been sent, which was not written, they would have voted the other way, and perhaps Sir Robert might have been in at the present moment.'

The Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine was the great staple of Lady Firebrace's correspondence with Mr. Tadpole. 'Woman's mission' took the shape, to her intelligence, of getting over his Grace to the Conservatives. She was much assisted in these endeavours by the information which she so dexterously acquired from the innocent and incautious Lord Masque.

Egremont was seated at dinner to-day by the side of Lady Joan. Unconsciously to himself, this had been arranged by Lady Marney. The action of woman on our destiny is unceasing. Egremont was scarcely in a happy mood for conversation. He was pensive, inclined to be absent; his thoughts, indeed, were of other things and persons than those around him. Lady Joan, however, only required a listener; she did not make inquiries like Lady Maud, or impart her own impressions by suggesting them as your own. Lady Joan gave Egremont an account of the Aztec cities, of which she had been reading that morning, and of the several historical theories which their discovery had suggested; then she imparted her own, which differed from all, but which seemed clearly the right one. Mexico led to Egypt. Lady Joan was as familiar with the Pharaohs as with the Caciques of the new world. The phonetic system was despatched by the way. Then came Champollion; then Paris; then all its celebrities, literary and especially scientific; then came the letter from Arago received that morning; and the letter from Dr. Buckland expected to-morrow. She

was delighted that one had written; wondered why the other had not. Finally, before the ladies had retired, she had invited Egremont to join Lady Marney in a visit to her observatory, where they were to behold a comet which she had been the first to detect.

Lady Firebrace, next to the duke, indulged in mysterious fiddle-faddle as to the state of parties. She, too, had her correspondents, and her letters received or awaited. Tadpole said this; Lord Masque, on the contrary, said that: the truth lay, perhaps, between them; some result, developed by the clear intelligence of Lady Firebrace, acting on the data with which they supplied her. The duke listened with calm excitement to the transcendental revelations of his Egeria. Nothing appeared to be concealed from her; the inmost mind of the sovereign; there was not a royal prejudice that was not mapped in her secret inventory; the cabinets of the Whigs, and the clubs of the Tories, she had the 'open sesame' to all of them. Sir Somebody did not want office, though he pretended to; and Lord Nobody did want office, though he pretended he did not. One great man thought the pear was not ripe; another that it was quite rotten; but then the first was coming on the stage, and the other was going off. In estimating the accuracy of a political opinion, one should take into consideration the standing of the opinionist.

At the right moment, and when she was sure she was not overheard, Lady Firebrace played her trump card, the pack having been previously cut by Mr. Tadpole.

'And whom do you think Sir Robert would send to Ireland?' and she looked up in the face of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine.

'I suppose the person he sent before,' said his Grace.

Lady Firebrace shook her head.

'Lord Haddington will not go to Ireland again,' replied her ladyship, mysteriously; 'mark me. And Lord de Grey does not like to go; and if he did, there are objections. And the Duke of Northumberland, he will not go. And who else is there? We must have a nobleman of the highest rank for Ireland; one who has not mixed himself up with Irish questions; who has always been in old days for emancipation; a Conservative, not an Orangeman. You understand. That is the person Sir Robert will send, and whom Sir Robert wants.'

'He will have some difficulty in finding such a person,' said the duke. 'If, indeed, the blundering affair of 1834 had not occurred, and things had taken their legitimate course, and we had seen a man like Lord Stanley, for instance, at the head of affairs, or leading a great party, why then indeed your friends the Conservatives, for every sensible man must be a Conservative, in the right sense of the word, would have stood in a very different position; but now—,' and his Grace shook his head.

'Sir Robert will never consent to form a government again without Lord Stanley,' said Lady Firebrace.

'Perhaps not,' said the duke.

'Do you know whose name I have heard mentioned in a certain quarter as the person Sir Robert would wish to see in Ireland?' continued Lady Firebrace.

His Grace lent his ear.

'The Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine,' said Lady Firebrace.

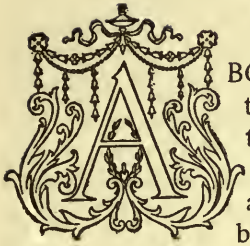
'Quite impossible,' said the duke. 'I am no party man; if I be anything, I am a supporter of the government. True it is, I do not like the way they are going on, and I disapprove of all their measures; but we must stand by our friends, Lady Firebrace. To be sure, if the country were in danger, and the Queen personally appealed to one, and the Conservative party were really a Conservative party, and not an old crazy faction, vamped up, and whitewashed into decency, one might pause and consider. But I am free to confess I must see things in a very different condition from what they are at present, before I could be called upon to take that step. I must see men like Lord Stanley—'

'I know what you are going to say, my dear Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine. I tell you again, Lord Stanley is with us heart and soul; and before long I feel persuaded I shall see your Grace in the Castle of Dublin.'

'I am too old; at least, I am afraid so,' said the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, with a relenting smile.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Fishing Trip and What Came of It.



BOUT three miles before it reaches the town, the river Mowe undulates through a plain. The scene, though not very picturesque, has a glad and sparkling character. A stone bridge unites the opposite banks by three arches of good proportion; the land about consists of meads of a vivid colour, or vegetable gardens to supply the neighbouring population, and whose various hues give life and lightness to the level ground. The immediate boundaries of the plain on either side are chiefly woods; above the crest of which in one direction expands the brown bosom of a moor. The cottages which are sprinkled about this scene, being built of stone, and on an ample scale, contribute to the idea of comfort and plenty which, with a serene sky and on a soft summer day, the traveller willingly associates with it.

Such were the sky and season in which Egremont emerged on this scene, a few days after the incidents recorded in our last chapter. He had been fishing in the park of Mowbray, and had followed the rivulet through many windings until, quitting the enclosed

domain, it had forced its way through some craggy underwood at the bottom of the hilly moors we have noticed, and, finally entering the plain, lost itself in the waters of the greater stream.

Good sport had not awaited Egremont. Truth to say, his rod had played in a careless hand. He had taken it, though an adept in the craft when in the mood, rather as an excuse to be alone than a means to be amused. There are seasons in life when solitude is a necessity; and such a one had now descended on the spirit of the brother of Lord Marney.

The form of Sybil Gerard was stamped upon his brain. It blended with all his thoughts; it haunted every object. Who was this girl, unlike all women whom he had yet encountered, who spoke with such sweet seriousness of things of such vast import, but which had never crossed his mind, and with a kind of mournful majesty bewailed the degradation of her race? The daughter of the lowly, yet proud of her birth. Not a noble lady in the land who could boast a mien more complete, and none of them thus gifted, who possessed withal the fascinating simplicity that pervaded every gesture and accent of the daughter of Gerard.

Yes! the daughter of Gerard; the daughter of a workman at a factory. It had not been difficult, after the departure of Sybil, to extract this information from the garrulous wife of the weaver. And that father,—he was not unknown to Egremont. His proud form and generous countenance were still fresh in the mind's eye of our friend. Not less so his thoughtful speech; full of knowledge and meditation and earnest feeling! How much that he had spoken still echoed in the heart and rung in the brooding

ear of Egremont. And his friend, too, that pale man with those glittering eyes, who, without affectation, without pedantry, with artlessness on the contrary, and a degree of earnest singleness, had glanced like a master of philosophy at the loftiest principles of political science, was he too a workman? And are these then THE PEOPLE? If so, thought Egremont would that I lived more among them! Compared with their converse, the tattle of our saloons has in it something humiliating. It is not merely that it is deficient in warmth, and depth, and breadth; that it is always discussing persons instead of principles, and cloaking its want of thought in mimetic dogmas, and its want of feeling in superficial raillery; it is not merely that it has neither imagination, nor fancy, nor sentiment, nor feeling, nor knowledge to recommend it; but it appears to me, even as regards manner and expression, inferior in refinement and phraseology; in short, trivial, uninteresting, stupid, really vulgar.

It seemed to Egremont that, from the day he met these persons in the Abbey ruins, the horizon of his experience had insensibly expanded; more than that, there were streaks of light breaking in the distance, which already gave a new aspect to much that was known, and which perhaps was ultimately destined to reveal much that was now utterly obscure. He could not resist the conviction that, from the time in question, his sympathies had become more lively and more extended; that a masculine impulse had been given to his mind; that he was inclined to view public questions in a light very different from that in which he had surveyed them a few weeks back, when on the hustings of his borough.

Revolving these things, he emerged, as we have

stated, into the plain of the Mowe, and, guiding his path by the course of the river, he arrived at the bridge which a fancy tempted him to cross. In its centre was a man gazing on the waters below and leaning over the parapet. His footstep roused the loiterer, who looked round; and Egremont saw that it was Walter Gerard.

Gerard returned his salute, and said, 'Early hours on Saturday afternoon make us all saunterers;' and then, as their way was the same, they walked on together. It seemed that Gerard's cottage was near at hand, and, having inquired after Egremont's sport, and receiving for a reply a present of a brace of trout,—the only one, by-the-bye, that was in Egremont's basket,—he could scarcely do less than invite his companion to rest himself.'

'There is my home,' said Gerard, pointing to a cottage recently built, and in a pleasing style. Its materials were of a fawn-coloured stone, common in the Mowbray quarries. A scarlet creeper clustered round one side of its ample porch; its windows were large, mullioned, and neatly latticed; it stood in the midst of a garden of no mean dimensions, but every bed and nook of which teemed with cultivation; flowers and vegetables both abounded, while an orchard rich with the promise of many fruits—ripe pears and famous pippins of the north and plums of every shape and hue—screened the dwelling from that wind against which the woods that formed its background were no protection.

'And you are well lodged! Your garden does you honour.'

'I'll be honest enough to own I have no claim to the credit,' said Gerard. 'I am but a lazy chiel.'

They entered the cottage where a hale old woman greeted them.

'She is too old to be my wife, and too young to be my mother,' said Gerard, smiling; 'but she is a good creature, and has looked after me many a long day. Come, dame,' he said, 'thou'lt bring us a cup of tea; 'tis a good evening beverage,' he added, turning to Egremont, 'and what I ever take at this time. And if you care to light a pipe, you will find a companion.'

'I have renounced tobacco,' said Egremont; 'tobacco is the tomb of love,' and they entered a neatly-furnished chamber, having that habitable look which the best room of a farm-house too often wants. Instead of the cast-off furniture of other establishments, at the same time dingy and tawdry, mock rosewood chairs and tarnished mahogany tables, it contained an oaken table, some cottage chairs made of beech-wood, and a Dutch clock. But what surprised Egremont was the appearance of several shelves well lined with volumes. Their contents, too, on closer inspection were remarkable. They indicated a student of a high order. Egremont read the titles of works which he only knew by fame, but which treated of the loftiest and most subtle questions of social and political philosophy. As he was throwing his eyes over them, his companion said, 'Ah! I see you think me as great a scholar as I am a gardener; but with as little justice; these books are not mine.'

'To whomsoever they belong,' said Egremont, 'if we are to judge from his collection, he has a tolerably strong head.'

'Ay, ay,' said Gerard, 'the world will hear of him yet, though he was only a workman, and the

son of a workman. He has not been at your schools and your colleges, but he can write his mother tongue as Shakespeare and Cobbett wrote it; and you must do that, if you wish to influence the people.'

'And might I ask his name?' said Egremont.

'Stephen Morley, my friend.'

'The person I saw with you at Marney Abbey?'

'The same.'

'And he lives with you?'

'Why, we kept house together, if you would call it so. Stephen does not give much trouble in that way. He only drinks water and only eats herbs and fruits. He is the gardener,' added Gerard, smiling. 'I don't know how we shall fare when he leaves me.'

'And is he going to leave you?'

'Why, in a manner he has gone. He has taken a cottage about a quarter of a mile up dale, and only left his books here because he is going into ——shire in a day or two, on some business that maybe will take him a week or so. The books are safer here, you see, for the present, for Stephen lives alone, and is a good deal away, for he edits a paper at Mowbray, and that must be looked after. He is to be my gardener still. I promised him that. Well done, dame,' said Gerard, as the old woman entered; 'I hope, for the honour of the house, a good brew. Now, comrade, sit down: it will do you good after your long stroll. You should eat your own trout if you would wait.'

'By no means. You will miss your friend, I should think.'

'We shall see a good deal of him, I doubt not, what with the garden and neighbourhood and so on; besides, in a manner, he is master of his own time.

His work is not like ours; and though the pull on the brain is sometimes great, I have often wished I had a talent that way. It's a drear life to do the same thing every day at the same hour. But I never could express my ideas except with my tongue; and there I feel tolerably at home.'

'It will be a pity to see this room without these books,' said Egremont, encouraging conversation on domestic subjects.

'So it will,' said Gerard. 'I have got very few of my own. But my daughter will be able to fill the shelves in time, I warrant.'

'Your daughter; she is coming to live with you?'

'Yes; that is the reason why Stephen quits us. He only remained here until Sybil could keep my house, and that happy day is at hand.'

'That is a great compensation for the loss of your friend,' said Egremont.

'And yet she talks of flitting,' said Gerard, in rather a melancholy tone. 'She hankers after the cloister. She has passed a still, sweet life in the convent here; the Superior is the sister of my employer and a very saint on earth; and Sybil knows nothing of the real world except its sufferings. No matter,' he added more cheerfully; 'I would not have her take the veil rashly, but, if I lose her, it may be for the best. For the married life of a woman of our class, in the present condition of our country, is a lease of woe,' he added, shaking his head, 'slaves, and the slaves of slaves! Even woman's spirit cannot stand against it; and it can bear up against more than we can master.'

'Your daughter is not made for the common cares of life,' said Egremont.

'We'll not talk of them,' said Gerard. 'Sybil has an English heart, and that's not easily broken. And you, comrade, you are a traveller in these parts, eh?'

'A kind of traveller; something in the way of your friend Morley—connected with the press.'

'Indeed! a reporter, eh? I thought you had something about you a little more knowing than we provincials.'

'Yes; a reporter. They want information in London as to the real state of the country, and this time of the year, Parliament not sitting—'

'Ah; I understand, a flying commission and a summer tour. Well, I often wish I were a penman; but I never could do it. I'll read any day as long as you like, but that writing I could never manage. My friend Morley is a powerful hand at it. His journal circulates a good deal about here; and if, as I often tell him, he would only sink his high-flying philosophy and stick to old English politics, he might make a property of it. You'll like to know him?'

'Much.'

'And what first took you to the press, if I may ask?'

'Why—my father was a gentleman,' said Egremont in a hesitating tone, 'and I was a younger son.'

'Ah!' said Gerard, 'that is as bad as being a woman.'

'I had no patrimony,' continued Egremont, 'and I was obliged to work; I had no head, I believe, for the law; the Church was not exactly in my way; and as for the army, how was I to advance without money or connections? I had had some education, and so I thought I would turn it to account.'

'Wisely done! you are one of the working classes, and will enlist, I hope, in the great struggle against the drones. The natural friends of the people are younger sons, though they are generally enlisted against us. The more fools they, to devote their energies to the maintenance of a system which is founded on selfishness and which leads to fraud; and of which they are the first victims. But every man thinks he will be an exception.'

'And yet,' said Egremont, 'a great family, rooted in the land, has been deemed to be an element of political strength.'

'I'll tell you what,' said Gerard, 'there is a great family in this country, and rooted in it, of which we have heard much less than they deserved, but of which I suspect we shall very soon hear enough to make us all think a bit.'

'In this county?'

'Ay; in this county and every other one: I mean the People.'

'Ah!' said Egremont, 'that family has existed for a long time.'

'But it has taken to increase rapidly of late, my friend — how may I call you?'

'They call me Franklin.'

'A good English name of a good English class that has disappeared. Well, Mr. Franklin, be sure of this, that the population returns of this country are very instructive reading.'

'I can conceive so.'

'I became a man when the bad times were beginning,' said Gerard; 'I have passed through many doleful years. I was a Franklin's son myself, and we had lived on this island at least no worse for a longer

time than I care to recollect, as little as what I am now. But that's nothing; I am not thinking of myself. I am prosperous in a fashion; it is the serfs I live among of whom I am thinking. Well, I have heard, in the course of years, of some specifics for this constant degradation of the people; some thing or some person that was to put all right; and for my part, I was not unready to support any proposal or follow any leader. There was reform, and there was paper money, and no machinery, and a thousand other remedies; and there were demagogues of all kinds, some as base as myself, and some with blood in their veins almost as costly as flows in those of our great neighbour here, Earl de Mowbray,—and I have always heard that was very choice; but I will frankly own to you, I never had much faith in any of these proposals or proposers; still, they were a change, and that is something. But I have been persuaded of late that there is something going on in this country of more efficacy; a remedial power, as I believe, and irresistible; but whether remedial or not, at any rate a power that will mar all or cure all. You apprehend me? I speak of the annual arrival of more than three hundred thousand strangers in this island. How will you feed them? How will you clothe them? How will you house them? They have given up butcher's meat; must they give up bread? And as for raiment and shelter, the rags of the kingdom are exhausted, and your sinks and cellars already swarm like rabbit warrens.'

''Tis an awful consideration,' said Egremont, musing.

'Awful,' said Gerard; ''tis the most solemn thing since the deluge. What kingdom can stand against

it? Why, go to your history — you're a scholar — and see the fall of the great Roman empire; what was that? Every now and then there came two or three hundred thousand strangers out of the forests, and crossed the mountains and rivers. They come to us every year, and in greater numbers. What are your invasions of the barbarous nations, your Goths and Visigoths, your Lombards and Huns, to our population returns!'

CHAPTER XXIII.

Tragedies of a Mining Town.

THE last rays of the sun contending with clouds of smoke that drifted across the country, partially illumined a peculiar landscape. Far as the eye could reach, and the region was level, except where a range of limestone hills formed its distant limit, a wilderness of cottages, or tenements that were hardly entitled to a higher name, were scattered for many miles over the land; some detached, some connected in little rows, some clustering in groups, yet rarely forming continuous streets, but interspersed with blazing furnaces, heaps of burning coal, and piles of smouldering ironstone; while forges and engine chimneys roared and puffed in all directions, and indicated the frequent presence of the mouth of the mine, and the bank of the coal-pit. Notwithstanding the whole country might be compared to a vast rabbit warren, it was nevertheless intersected with canals, crossing each other at various levels; and though the subterranean operations were prosecuted with so much avidity that it was not uncommon to observe whole rows of houses awry, from the shifting and hollow

nature of the land, still, intermingled with heaps of mineral refuse, or of metallic dross, patches of the surface might here and there be recognised, covered, as if in mockery, with grass and corn, looking very much like those gentlemen's sons that we used to read of in our youth, stolen by the chimneysweeps, and giving some intimations of their breeding beneath their grimy livery. But a tree or a shrub, such an existence was unknown in this dingy rather than dreary region.

It was the twilight hour; the hour at which in southern climes the peasant kneels before the sunset image of the blessed Hebrew maiden; when caravans halt in their long course over vast deserts, and the turbaned traveller, bending in the sand, pays his homage to the sacred stone and the sacred city; the hour, not less holy, that announces the cessation of English toil, and sends forth the miner and the collier to breathe the air of earth, and gaze on the light of heaven.

They come forth: the mine delivers its gang and the pit its bondsmen; the forge is silent and the engine is still. The plain is covered with the swarming multitude: bands of stalwart men, broad-chested and muscular, wet with toil, and black as the children of the tropics; troops of youth, alas! of both sexes, though neither their raiment nor their language indicates the difference; all are clad in male attire; and oaths that men might shudder at issue from lips born to breathe words of sweetness. Yet these are to be, some are, the mothers of England! But can we wonder at the hideous coarseness of their language, when we remember the savage rudeness of their lives? Naked to the waist, an iron chain

fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen hours a day, hauls and hurries tubs of coals up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous, and plashy; circumstances that seem to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. Those worthy gentlemen, too, appear to have been singularly unconscious of the sufferings of the little trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ.

See, too, these emerge from the bowels of the earth! Infants of four and five years of age, many of them girls, pretty and still soft and timid; entrusted with the fulfilment of responsible duties, the very nature of which entails on them the necessity of being the earliest to enter the mine and the latest to leave it. Their labour indeed is not severe, for that would be impossible, but it is passed in darkness and in solitude. They endure that punishment which philosophical philanthropy has invented for the direst criminals, and which those criminals deem more terrible than the death for which it is substituted. Hour after hour elapses, and all that reminds the infant trappers of the world they have quitted, and that which they have joined, is the passage of the coal-waggons for which they open the air-doors of the galleries, and on keeping which doors constantly closed, except at this moment of passage, the safety of the mine and the lives of the persons employed in it entirely depend.

Sir Joshua, a man of genius and a courtly artist, struck by the seraphic countenance of Lady Alice Gordon, when a child of very tender years, painted

the celestial visage in various attitudes on the same canvas, and styled the group of heavenly faces guardian angels!

We would say to some great master of the pencil, Mr. Landseer, or Mr. Etty, go thou to the little trappers and do likewise!

A small party of miners approached a house of more pretension than the generality of the dwellings, and announcing its character by a flagrant sign of the Rising Sun. They entered it as men accustomed, and were greeted with smiles and many civil words from the lady at the bar, who enquired cheerfully what the gentlemen would have. They soon found themselves seated in the tap, and, though it was not entirely unoccupied, in their accustomed places; for there seemed a general understanding that they enjoyed a prescriptive right.

With hunches of white bread in their black hands, and grinning with their sable countenances and ivory teeth, they really looked like a gang of negroes at a revel.

The cups of ale circulated, the pipes were lighted, the preliminary puffs achieved. There was at length silence, when he who seemed their leader, and who filled a sort of president's seat, took his pipe from his mouth, and then uttering the first complete sentence that had yet been expressed aloud, thus delivered himself:

'The fact is, we are tommied to death.'

'You never spoke a truer word, Master Nixon,' said one of his companions.

'It's gospel, every word of it,' said another.

'And the point is,' continued Master Nixon, 'what are we for to do?'

'Ay, surely,' said a collier, 'that's the marrow.'

'Ay, ay,' agreed several; 'there it is.'

'The question is,' said Nixon, looking round with a magisterial air, 'what *is* wages? I say, 'tayn't sugar, 'tayn't tea, 'tayn't bacon. I don't think 'tis candles; but of this I be sure, 'tayn't waistcoats.'

Here there was a general groan.

'Comrades,' continued Nixon, 'you know what has happened; you know as how Juggins applied for his balance after his tommy-book was paid up, and that incarnate nigger Diggs has made him take two waistcoats. Now the question rises, what is a collier to do with waistcoats? Pawn 'em, I s'pose, to Diggs' son-in-law, next door to his father's shop, and sell the ticket for sixpence. Now, there's the question; keep to the question; the question is waistcoats and tommy; first waistcoats, and then tommy.'

'I have been making a pound a week these two months past,' said another, 'but, as I'm a sinner saved, I have never seen the young Queen's picture yet.'

'And I have been obliged to pay the doctor for my poor wife in tommy,' said another. '"Doctor," I said, says I, "I blush to do it, but all I have got is tommy, and what shall it be, bacon or cheese?" "Cheese at tenpence a pound," says he, "which I buy for my servants at sixpence! Never mind," says he, for he is a thorough Christian, "I'll take the tommy as I find it."'

'Juggins has got his rent to pay, and is afeard of the bums,' said Nixon; 'and he has got two waistcoats!'

'Besides,' said another, 'Diggs' tommy is only open once a-week, and if you're not there in time,

you go over for another seven days. And it's such a distance, and he keeps a body there such a time; it's always a day's work for my poor woman; she can't do nothing after it, what with the waiting, and the standing, and the cussing of Master Joseph Diggs; for he do swear at the women, when they rush in for the first turn, most fearful.'

'They do say he's a shocking little dog.'

'Master Joseph is wery wiolent, but there is no one like old Diggs for grabbing a bit of one's wages. He do so love it! And then he says you never need be at no loss for nothing; you can find everything under my roof. I should like to know who is to mend our shoes. Has Gaffer Diggs a cobbler's stall?'

'Or sell us a penn'orth of potatoes,' said another. 'Or a ha'porth of milk.'

'No; and so to get them one is obliged to go and sell some tommy, and much one gets for it. Bacon at ninepence a-pound at Diggs', which you may get at a huckster's for sixpence; and therefore the huckster can't be expected to give you more than fourpence-halfpenny, by which token the tommy in our field just cuts our wages atween the navel.'

'And that's as true as if you heard it in church, Master Waghorn.'

'This Diggs seems to be an oppressor of the people,' said a voice from a distant corner of the room.

Master Nixon looked around, smoked, puffed, and then said, 'I should think he wor; as bloody-a-hearted butty* as ever jingled.'

* A butty in the mining districts is a middleman: a doggy is his manager. The butty generally keeps a tommy, or truck shop, and pays the wages of his labourers in goods. When miners and colliers strike, they term it 'going to play.'

'But what business has a butty to keep a shop?' inquired the stranger. 'The law touches him.'

'I should like to know who would touch the law,' said Nixon; 'not I for one. Them tommy-shops is very delicate things; they won't stand no handling, I can tell you that.'

'But he cannot force you to take goods,' said the stranger; 'he must pay you in current coin of the realm if you demand it.'

'They only pay us once in five weeks,' said a collier; 'and how is a man to live meanwhile? And suppose we were to make shift for a month or five weeks, and have all our money coming, and have no tommy out of the shop, what would the butty say to me? He would say, "Do you want e'er a note this time?" and if I was to say, "No," then he would say, "You've no call to go down to work any more here." And that's what I call forsation.'

'Ay, ay,' said another collier; 'ask for the young Queen's picture, and you would soon have to put your shirt on, and go up the shaft.'

'It's them long reckonings that force us to the tommy-shops,' said another collier; 'and if a butty turns you away because you won't take no tommy, you're a marked man in every field about.'

'There's wuss things as tommy,' said a collier who had hitherto been silent, 'and that's these here butties. What's going on in the pit is known only to God Almighty and the colliers. I have been a consistent Methodist for many years, strived to do well, and all the harm I have ever done to the butties was to tell them that their deeds would not stand on the day of judgment.'

'They are deeds of darkness surely; for many's the morn we work for nothing, by one excuse or another, and many's the good stint that they undermeasure. And many's the cup of their ale that you must drink before they will give you any work. If the Queen would do something for us poor men, it would be a blessed job.'

'There ayn't no black tyrant on this earth like a butty, surely,' said a collier; 'and there's no redress for poor men.'

'But why do not you state your grievances to the landlords and lessees?' said the stranger.

'I take it you be a stranger in these parts, sir,' said Master Nixon, following up this remark by an enormous puff. He was the oracle of his circle, and there was silence whenever he was inclined to address them, which was not too often, though when he spoke, his words, as his followers often observed, were a regular ten-yard coal.

'I take it you be a stranger in these parts, sir, or else you would know that it's as easy for a miner to speak to a main-master as it is for me to pick coal with this here clay. Sir, there's a gulf atween 'em. I went into the pit when I was five year old, and counts forty year in the service come Martinmas, and a very good age, sir, for a man that does his work, and I knows what I'm speaking about. In forty year, sir, a man sees a pretty deal, 'specially when he don't move out of the same spot and keeps his 'tention. I've been at play, sir, several times in forty year, and have seen as great stick-outs as ever happened in this country. I've seen the people at play for weeks together, and so clammed that I never tasted nothing but a potato and a little salt for more

than a fortnight. Talk of tommy, that was hard fare, but we were holding out for our rights, and that's sauce for any gander. And I'll tell you what, sir, that I never knew the people play yet, but if a word had passed atween them and the main-masters afore-hand, it might not have been settled; but you can't get at them any way. Atween the poor man and the gentleman there never was no connection, and that's the wital mischief of this country.'

'It's a very true word, Master Nixon, and by this token that when we went to play in '28, and the masters said they would meet us, what did they do but walk about the ground and speak to the butties. The butties has their ear.'

'We never want no soldiers here if the masters would speak with the men; but the sight of a pit-man is pison to a gentleman, and if we go up to speak with 'em, they always run away.'

'It's the butties,' said Nixon; 'they're wusser nor tommy.'

'The people will never have their rights,' said the stranger, 'until they learn their power. Suppose, instead of sticking out and playing, fifty of your families were to live under one roof. You would live better than you live now; you would feed more fully, and be lodged and clothed more comfortably, and you might save half the amount of your wages; you would become capitalists; you might yourselves hire your mines and pits from the owners, and pay them a better rent than they now obtain, and yet yourselves gain more and work less.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Nixon, taking his pipe from his mouth, and sending forth a volume of smoke, 'you speak like a book.'

'It is the principle of association,' said the stranger; 'the want of the age.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Nixon, 'this here age wants a great deal, but what it principally wants is to have its wages paid in the current coin of the realm.'

Soon after this there were symptoms of empty mugs and exhausted pipes, and the party began to stir. The stranger addressing Nixon, inquired of him what was their present distance from Wodgate.

'Wodgate!' exclaimed Mr. Nixon with an unconscious air.

'The gentleman means Hell-house Yard,' said one of his companions.

'I'm at home,' said Mr. Nixon, 'but 'tis the first time I ever heard Hell-house Yard called Wodgate.'

'It's called so in joggraphy,' said Juggins.

'But you bay'nt going to Hell-house Yard this time of night!' said Mr. Nixon. 'I'd as soon think of going down the pit with the windlass turned by lushy Bob.'

''Tayn't a journey for Christians,' said Juggins.

'They're a very queer lot even in sunshine,' said another.

'And how far is it?' asked the stranger.

'I walked there once in three hours,' said a collier, 'but that was to the wake. If you want to see divils carnal, there's your time of day. They're no less than heathens, I be sure. I'd be sorry to see even our butty among them, for he is a sort of a Christian when he has taken a glass of ale.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Family Quarrel.

WO days after the visit of Egremont to the cottage of Walter Gerard, the visit of the Marney family to Mowbray terminated, and they returned to the Abbey.

There is something mournful in the breaking up of an agreeable party, and few are the roofs under which one has sojourned that are quitted without some feeling of depression. The sudden cessation of all those sources of excitement which pervade a gay and well-arranged mansion in the country unstrings the nervous system. For a week or so, we have done nothing which was not agreeable, and heard nothing which was not pleasant. Our self-love has been respected; there has been a total cessation of petty cares; all the enjoyment of an establishment without any of its solicitude. We have beheld civilisation only in its favoured aspect, and tasted only the sunny side of the fruit. Sometimes there are associations with our visit of a still sweeter and softer character, but on these we need not dwell: glances that cannot be forgotten, and tones that linger in the ear; sentiment that subdues the soul, and flirtation that agitates

the fancy. No matter, whatever may be the cause, one too often drives away from a country-house rather hipped. The specific would be immediately to drive to another, and it is a favourite remedy. But sometimes it is not in our power; sometimes, for instance, we must return to our household gods in the shape of a nursery; and though this was not the form assumed by the penates of Lord Marney, his presence, the presence of an individual so important and indefatigable, was still required. His lordship had passed his time at Mowbray to his satisfaction. He had had his own way in everything. His selfishness had not received a single shock. He had laid down the law and it had not been questioned. He had dogmatised and impugned, and his assertions had passed current, and his doctrines had been accepted as orthodox. Lord de Mowbray suited him; he liked the consideration of so great a personage. Lord Marney also really liked pomp, a curious table, and a luxurious life; but he liked them under any roof rather than his own. Not that he was what is commonly called a screw, that is to say, he was not a mere screw; but he was acute and malicious; saw everybody's worth and position at a glance; could not bear to expend his choice wines and costly viands on hangers-on and toad-eaters, though at the same time no man encouraged and required hangers-on and toad-eaters more. Lord Marney had all the petty social vices, and none of those petty social weaknesses which soften their harshness or their hideousness. To receive a prince of the blood, or a great peer, he would spare nothing. Had he to fulfil any of the public duties of his station, his performance would baffle criticism. But he enjoyed making the Vicar of Marney or Captain

Grouse drink some claret that was on the wane, or praise a bottle of Burgundy that he knew was pricked.

Little things affect little minds. Lord Marney rose in no very good humour; he was kept at the station, which aggravated his spleen. During his journey on the railroad he spoke little, and though he more than once laboured to get up a controversy he was unable, for Lady Marney, who rather dreaded her dull home, and was not yet in a tone of mind that could hail the presence of the little Poinsett as full compensation for the brilliant circle of Mowbray, replied in amiable monosyllables, and Egremont himself in austere ones, for he was musing over Sybil Gerard and a thousand things as wild and sweet.

Everything went wrong this day. Even Captain Grouse was not at the Abbey to welcome them back. He was playing in a cricket match, Marney against Marham. Nothing else would have induced him to be absent. So it happened that the three fellow-travellers had to dine together, utterly weary of themselves and of each other. Captain Grouse was never more wanted; he would have amused Lord Marney, relieved his wife and brother, reported all that had been said and done in their neighbourhood during their absence, introduced a new tone, and effected a happy diversion. Leaving Mowbray, detained at the station, Grouse away, some disagreeable letters, or letters which an ill-humoured man chooses to esteem disagreeable, seemed to announce a climax. Lord Marney ordered the dinner to be served in the small dining-room, which was contiguous to a saloon in which Lady Marney, when they were alone, generally passed the evening.

The dinner was silent and sombre; happily it was also short. Lord Marney tasted several dishes, ate of none; found fault with his own claret, though the butler had given him a choice bottle; praised Lord Mowbray's, wondered where he got it, 'all the wines at Mowbray were good;' then for the twentieth time wondered what could have induced Grouse to fix the cricket match the day he returned home, though he chose to forget that he had never communicated to Grouse even the probable day on which he might be expected.

As for Egremont, it must be admitted that he was scarcely in a more contented mood than his brother, though he had not such insufficient cause for his dark humours. In quitting Mowbray, he had quitted something else than merely an agreeable circle: enough had happened in that visit to stir up the deep recesses of his heart, and to prompt him to investigate in an unusual spirit the cause and attributes of his position. He had found a letter on his return to the Abbey not calculated to dispel these somewhat morbid feelings; a letter from his agent urging the settlement of his election accounts, the primary cause of his visit to his brother.

Lady Marney left the dining-room; the brothers were alone. Lord Marney filled a bumper, which he drank off rapidly, pushed the bottle to his brother, and then said again, 'What a cursed bore it is that Grouse is not here!'

'Well, I cannot say, George, that I particularly miss the presence of Captain Grouse,' said his brother.

Lord Marney looked at Egremont pugnaciously, and then observed, 'Grouse is a capital fellow; one is never dull when Grouse is here.'

'Well, for my part,' said Egremont, 'I do not much admire that amusement which is dependent on the efforts of hangers-on.'

'Grouse is no more a hanger-on than any one else,' said Lord Marney, rather fiercely.

'Perhaps not,' said Egremont quietly; 'I am no judge of such sort of people.'

'I should like to know what you are a judge of; certainly not of making yourself agreeable to young ladies. Arabella cannot be particularly charmed with the result of your visit to Mowbray, as far as Lady Joan is concerned, Arabella's most intimate friend, by-the-bye. If for no other reason, you ought to have paid her more attention.'

'I cannot pay attention unless I am attracted,' said Egremont; 'I have not the ever-ready talent of your friend, Captain Grouse.'

'I do not know what you mean by my friend, Captain Grouse. Captain Grouse is no more my friend than your friend. One must have people about the house to do a thousand things which one cannot do one's self, and which one cannot trust to servants, and Grouse does all this capitally.'

'Exactly; he is just what I said, a capital hanger-on if you like, but still a hanger-on.'

'Well, and what then? Suppose he is a hanger-on; may I not have hangers-on as well as any other man?'

'Of course you may; but I am not bound to regret their absence.'

'Who said you were? But I will regret their absence, if I choose. And I regret the absence of Grouse, regret it very much; and if he did happen to be inextricably engaged in this unfortunate match, I

say, and you may contradict me, if you please, that he ought to have taken care that Slimsy dined here, to tell me all that had happened.'

'I am very glad he omitted to do so,' said Egremont; 'I prefer Grouse to Slimsy.'

'I dare say you do,' said Lord Marney, filling his glass and looking very black; 'you would like, I have no doubt, to see a fine gentleman-saint, like your friend Mr. St. Lys, at Marney, preaching in cottages, filling the people with discontent, lecturing me about low wages, soliciting plots of ground for new churches, and inveigling Arabella into subscriptions to painted windows.'

'I certainly should like to see a man like Aubrey St. Lys at Marney,' said Egremont quietly, but rather doggedly.

'And if he were here, I would soon see who should be master,' said Lord Marney; 'I would not succumb like Mowbray. One might as well have a Jesuit in the house at once.'

'I dare say St. Lys would care very little about entering your house,' said Egremont. 'I know it was with great reluctance that he ever came to Mowbray Castle.'

'I dare say; very great reluctance indeed. And very reluctant he was, I make no doubt, to sit next to Lady Maud. I wonder he does not fly higher, and preach to Lady Joan; but she is too sensible a woman for such fanatical tricks.'

'St. Lys thinks it his duty to enter all societies. That is the reason why he goes to Mowbray Castle, as well as to the squalid courts and cellars of the town. He takes care that those who are clad in purple and fine linen shall know the state of their neigh-

bours. They cannot at least plead ignorance for the non-fulfilment of their duty. Before St. Lys' time, the family at Mowbray Castle might as well have not existed, so far as benefiting their miserable vicinage. It would be well perhaps for other districts not less wretched, and for other families as high and favoured as the Mowbrays, if there were a Mr. St. Lys on the spot instead of a Mr. Slimsey.'

'I suppose that is meant for a cut,' said Lord Marney; 'but I wish the people were as well off in every part of the country as they are on my estate. They get here their eight shillings a week, always at least seven, and every hand is at this moment in employ, except a parcel of scoundrels who prefer wood-stealing and poaching, and who would prefer wood-stealing and poaching if you gave them double the wages. The rate of wages is nothing; certainty is the thing; and every man at Marney may be sure of his seven shillings a week for at least nine months in the year; and for the other three, they can go to the House, and a very proper place for them; it is heated with hot air, and has every comfort. Even Marney Abbey is not heated with hot air. I have often thought of it; it makes me mad sometimes to think of those lazy, pampered menials passing their lives with their backs to a great roaring fire; but I am afraid of the flues.'

'I wonder, talking of fires, that you are not more afraid of burning ricks,' said Egremont.

'It's an infernal lie,' said Lord Marney, very violently.

'What is?' said Egremont.

'That there is any incendiarism in this neighbourhood.'

'Why, there was a fire the day after I came.'

'That had nothing to do with wages; it was an accident. I examined into it myself; so did Grouse, so did Slimsey; I sent them about everywhere. I told them I was sure the fire was purely accidental, and to go and see about it; and they came back, and agreed that it was purely accidental.'

'I dare say they did,' said Egremont; 'but no one has discovered the accident.'

'For my part, I believe it was spontaneous combustion,' said Lord Marney.

'That is a satisfactory solution,' said Egremont; 'but for my part, the fire being a fact, and it being painfully notorious that the people of Marney—'

'Well, sir, the people of Marney?' said his lordship, fiercely.

'Are without question the most miserable population in the county—'

'Did Mr. St. Lys tell you that?' interrupted Lord Marney, white with rage.

'No, not Mr. St. Lys, but one better acquainted with the neighbourhood.'

'I'll know your informant's name,' said Lord Marney, with energy.

'My informant was a woman,' said Egremont.

'Lady Maud, I suppose; second-hand from Mr. St. Lys.'

'My informant was a woman, and one of the people,' said Egremont.

'Some poacher's drab! I don't care what women say; high or low, they always exaggerate.'

'The misery of a family who live upon seven or even eight shillings a week can scarcely be exaggerated.'

'What should you know about it? Did you ever live on seven or eight shillings a week? What can you know about the people, who pass your time at London clubs or in fine country houses? I suppose you want the people to live as they do at a house dinner at Boodle's. I say that a family can live well on seven shillings a week, and on eight shillings very well indeed. The poor are well off, at least the agricultural poor, very well off indeed. Their incomes are certain, that is a great point, and they have no cares, no anxieties; they always have a resource, they always have the House. People without cares do not require so much food as those whose life entails anxieties. See how long they live! Compare the rate of mortality among them with that of the manufacturing districts. Incendiarism indeed! If there had been a proper rural police, such a thing as incendiarism would never have been heard of!'

There was a pause. Lord Marney dashed off another bumper; Egremont sipped his wine. At length he said, 'This argument made me forget the principal reason, George, why I am glad that we are alone together to-day. I am sorry to bore you, but I am bored myself deucedly. I find a letter from my agent. These election accounts must be settled.'

'Why, I thought they were settled.'

'How do you mean?'

'I thought my mother had given you a thousand pounds.'

'No doubt of that, but that was long ago disposed of.'

'In my opinion quite enough for a seat in these times. Instead of paying to get into Parliament, a man ought to be paid for entering it.'

'There may be a good deal in what you say,' said Egremont; 'but it is too late to take that view of the business. The expense has been incurred and must be met.'

'I don't see that,' said Lord Marney; 'we have paid one thousand pounds and there is a balance unsettled. When was there ever a contest without a balance being unsettled? I remember hearing my father often say that when he stood for this county, our grandfather paid more than a hundred thousand pounds, and yet I know to this day there are accounts unsettled. Regularly every year I receive anonymous letters threatening me with fearful punishment if I don't pay one hundred and fifty pounds for a breakfast at the Jolly Tinkers.'

'You jest: the matter indeed requires a serious vein. I wish these accounts to be settled at once.'

'And I should like to know where the funds are to come from! I have none. The quantity of barns I am building now is something tremendous! Then this rage for draining; it would dry up any purse. What think you of two million tiles this year? And rents, to keep up which we are making these awful sacrifices; they are merely nominal, or soon will be. They never will be satisfied till they have touched the land. That is clear to me. I am prepared for a reduction of five-and-twenty per cent.; if the corn-laws are touched it can't be less than that. My mother ought to take it into consideration and reduce her jointure accordingly. But I dare say she will not; people are so selfish; particularly as she has given you this thousand pounds, which in fact after all comes out of my pocket.'

'All this you have said to me before. What does

it mean? I fought this battle at the instigation of the family, from no feeling of my own. You are the head of the family, and you were consulted on the step. Unless I had concluded that it was with your sanction, I certainly should not have made my appearance on the hustings.'

'I am glad you did, though,' said Lord Marney; 'Parliament is a great point for our class; in these days especially, more even than in the old time. I was truly rejoiced at your success, and it mortified the Whigs about us confoundedly. Some people thought there was only one family in the world to have their Richmond or their Malton. Getting you in for the old borough was really a *coup*.'

'Well, now to retain our interest,' said Egremont, 'quick payment of our expenses is the most efficient way, believe me.'

'You have got six years, perhaps seven,' said Lord Marney, 'and long before that I hope to find you the husband of Lady Joan Fitz-Warene.'

'I do not wish to connect the two contingencies,' said Egremont firmly.

'They are inseparable,' said Lord Marney.

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that I think this pedantic acquittance of an electioneering account is in the highest degree ridiculous, and that I cannot interfere in it. The legal expenses are, you say, paid; and if they were not, I should feel myself bound, as the head of the family, to defray them, but I can go no further. I cannot bring myself to sanction an expenditure for certainly unnecessary, perhaps, and I much fear it, for illegal and immoral purposes.'

'That really is your determination?'

'After the most mature reflection, prompted by a sincere solicitude for your benefit.'

'Well, George, I have often suspected it, but now I feel quite persuaded, that you are really the greatest humbug that ever existed.'

'Abuse is not argument, Mr. Egremont.'

'You are beneath abuse, as you are beneath every sentiment but one, which I entirely feel;' and Egremont rose from the table.

'You may thank your own obstinacy and conceit,' said Lord Marney. 'I took you to Mowbray Castle, and the cards were in your own hands if you chose to play them.'

'You have interfered with me once before on such a subject, Lord Marney,' said Egremont, with a kindling eye, and a cheek pallid with rage.

'You had better not say that again,' said Lord Marney, in a tone of menace.

'Why not?' asked Egremont, fiercely. 'Who and what are you to dare to address me thus?'

'I am your elder brother, sir, whose relationship to you is your only claim to the consideration of society.'

'A curse on the society that has fashioned such claims,' said Egremont, in a heightened tone: 'claims founded in selfishness, cruelty, and fraud, and leading to demoralisation, misery, and crime.'

'Claims which I will make you respect, at least in this house, sir,' said Lord Marney, springing from his chair.

'Touch me at your peril!' exclaimed Egremont, 'and I will forget you are my mother's son, and cleave you to the ground. You have been the blight of my life; you stole from me my bride, and now you would rob me of my honour.'

'Liar and villain!' exclaimed Lord Marney, darting forward; but at this moment his wife rushed into the apartment, and clung to him. 'For Heaven's sake,' she exclaimed, 'what is all this? George, Charles, dearest George!'

'Let me go, Arabella.'

'Let him come on.'

But Lady Marney gave a piercing shriek, and held out her arms to keep the brothers apart. A sound was heard at the other door; there was nothing in the world that Lord Marney dreaded so much as that his servants should witness a domestic scene. He sprang forward to the door, to prevent any one entering; partially opening it, he said Lady Marney was unwell and desired her maid; returning, he found Arabella insensible on the floor, and Egremont vanished!

CHAPTER XXV.

The Tommy-Shop.

IT WAS a wet morning; there had been a heavy rain since dawn, which, impelled by a gusty south-wester, came driving on a crowd of women and girls who were assembled before the door of a still closed shop. Some protected themselves with umbrellas; some sought shelter beneath a row of old elms that grew alongside the canal that fronted the house. Notwithstanding the weather, the clack of tongues was incessant.

'I thought I saw the wicket of the yard gates open,' said a woman.

'So did I,' said her neighbour, 'but it was shut again immediately.'

'It was only Master Joseph,' said a third. 'He likes to see us getting wet through.'

'If they would only let us into the yard, and get under one of the workshop sheds, as they do at Simmon's,' said another.

'You may well say Simmon's, Mrs. Page; I only wish my master served in his field.'

'I have been here since half-past four, Mrs. Grigsby, with this chilt at my breast all the time. It's three

miles for me here, and the same back, and unless I get the first turn, how are my poor boys to find their dinner ready when they come out of the pit?'

'A very true word, Mrs. Page; and by this token, that last Thursday I was here by half-past eleven, certainly afore noon, having only called at my mother-in-law's in the way, and it was eight o'clock before I got home. Ah! it's cruel work, is the tommy-shop.'

'How d'ye do, neighbour Prance?' said a comely dame, with a large white basket. 'And how's your good man? They was saying at Belfy's he had changed his service. I hear there's a new butty in Mr. Parker's field, but the old doggy kept on; so I always thought; he was always a favourite, and they do say measured the stints very fair. And what do you hear bacon is in town? They do tell me only sixpence, and real home-cured. I wonder Diggs has the face to be selling still at ninepence, and so very green! I think I see Dame Toddles; how wonderful she do wear! What are you doing here, little dear; very young to fetch tommy; keeping place for mother, eh! that's a good girl; she'd do well to be here soon, for I think the strike's on eight. Diggs is sticking it on yellow soap very terrible. What do you think — Ah! the doors are going to open. No — a false alarm.'

'How fare you, neighbour?' said a pale young woman, carrying an infant, to the comely dame. 'Here's an awful crowd, surely. The women will be fighting and tearing to get in, I guess. I be much afeard.'

'Well, "first come, first served," all the world over,' said the comely dame. 'And you must put a

good heart on the business, and tie your bonnet. I dare guess there are not much less than two hundred here. It's grand tommy-day, you know. And for my part, I don't care so much for a good squeedge; one sees so many faces one knows.'

'The cheese here at sixpence is pretty tidy,' said a crone to her companion; 'but you may get as good in town for fourpence.'

'What I complain is the weights,' replied her companion. 'I weighed my pound of butter bought last tommy-day and it was two penny pieces too light. Indeed! I have been, in my time, to all the shops about here, for the lads or their father, but never knew tommy so bad as this. I have two children at home ill from their flour; I have been very poorly myself; one is used to a little white clay, but when they lay it on thick, it's very grave.'

'Are your girls in the pit?'

'No; we strive to keep them out, and my man has gone scores of days on bread and water for that purpose; and if we were not forced to take so much tommy, one might manage; but tommy will beat anything. Health first, and honesty afterwards, that's my say.'

'Well, for my part,' said the crone, 'meat's my grievance: all the best bits go to the butties, and the pieces with bone in are chopped off for the colliers' wives.'

'Dame, when will the door open?' asked a little pale-faced boy. 'I have been here all this morn, and never broke my fast.'

'And what do you want, chilt?'

'I want a loaf for mother; but I don't feel I shall ever get home again, I'm all in a way so dizzy.'

'Liza Gray,' said a woman with black beady eyes, and a red nose, speaking in a sharp voice, and rushing up to a pretty slatternly woman in a straw bonnet, with a dirty fine ribbon, and a babe at her breast; 'you know the person I'm looking for.'

'Well, Mrs. Mullins, and how do you do?' she replied, in a sweet sawney tone.

'How do you do, indeed! How are people to do in these bad times?'

'They is indeed hard, Mrs. Mullins. If you could see my tommy-book! How I wish I knew figures! Made up as of last Thursday night by that little divil, Master Joe Diggs. He has stuck it in here, and stuck it in there, till it makes one all of a maze. I'm sure I never had the things; and my man is out of all patience, and says I can no more keep house than a natural born.'

'My man is a-wanting to see your man,' said Mrs. Mullins, with a flashing eye: 'and you know what about.'

'And very natural, too,' said Liza Gray; 'but how are we to pay the money we owe him with such a tommy-book as this, good neighbour Mullins?'

'We're as poor as our neighbours, Mrs. Gray; and if we are not paid, we must borrow. It's a scarlet shame to go to the spout because money lent to a friend is not to be found. You had it in your need, Liza Gray, and we want it in our need: and have it I will, Liza Gray.'

'Hush, hush!' said Liza Gray; 'don't wake the little 'un, for she is very fretful.'

'I will have the five shillings, or I will have as good,' said Mrs. Mullins.

'Hush, hush, neighbour; now, I'll tell you—you

shall have it; but yet a little time. This is great tommy-day, and settles our reckoning for five weeks; but my man may have a draw after to-morrow, and he shall draw five shillings, and give you half.'

'And the other half?' said Mrs. Mullins.

'Ah! the other half,' said Liza Gray with a sigh. 'Well, then, we shall have a death in our family soon: this poor babe can't struggle on much longer. It belongs to two burial clubs: that will be three pounds from each, and after the drink and the funeral, there will be enough to pay all our debts and put us all square.'

The door of Mr. Diggs' tommy-shop opened. The rush was like the advance into the pit of a theatre when the drama existed; pushing, squeezing, fighting, tearing, shrieking. On a high seat, guarded by rails from all contact, sat Mr. Diggs, senior, with a bland smile on his sanctified countenance, a pen behind his ear, and recommending his constrained customers in honeyed tones to be patient and orderly. Behind the substantial counter, which was an impregnable fortification, was his popular son, Master Joseph; a short, ill-favoured cur, with a spirit of vulgar oppression and malicious mischief stamped on his visage. His black, greasy lank hair, his pug nose, his coarse red face, and his projecting tusks, contrasted with the mild and lengthened countenance of his father, who looked very much like a wolf in sheep's clothing.

For the first five minutes Master Joseph Diggs did nothing but blaspheme and swear at his customers, occasionally leaning over the counter and cuffing the women in the van or lugging some girl by the hair.

'I was first, Master Joseph,' said a woman, eagerly.

'No; I was,' said another.

'I was here,' said the first, 'as the clock struck four, and seated myself on the steps, because I must be home early; my husband is hurt in the knee.'

'If you were first, you shall be helped last,' said Master Joseph, 'to reward you for your pains;' and he began taking the orders of the other women.

'Oh! Lord have mercy on me!' said the disappointed woman; 'and I got up in the middle of the night for this!'

'More fool you! And what you came for I am sure I don't know,' said Master Joseph; 'for you have a pretty long figure against you, I can tell you that.'

'I declare most solemnly —' said the woman.

'Don't make a brawling here,' said Master Joseph, 'or I'll jump over this here counter and knock you down, like nothink. What did you say, woman? are you deaf? what did you say? how much best tea do you want?'

'I don't want any, sir.'

'You never want best tea; you must take three ounces of best tea, or you shan't have nothing. If you say another word, I'll put you down four. You tall gal, what's your name, you keep back there, or I'll fetch you such a cut as'll keep you at home till next reckoning. Cuss you, you old fool, do you think I am to be kept all day while you are mumbling here? Who's pushing on there? I see you, Mrs. Page. Won't there be a black mark against you! Oh! it's Mrs. Prance, is it? Father, put down Mrs. Prance for a peck of flour. I'll have order here. You think the last bacon a little too fat: oh! you do, ma'am, do you? I'll take care you shan't complain in future; I likes to please my customers. There's a very nice flitch hang-

ing up in the engine-room; the men wanted some rust for the machinery; you shall have a slice of that; and we'll say tenpence a pound, high-dried, and wery lean; will that satisfy you?

'Order there, order; you cussed women, order, or I'll be among you. And if I just do jump over this here counter, won't I let fly right and left! Speak out, you idiot! do you think I can hear your muttering in this Babel? Cuss them; I'll keep them quiet:' and so he took up a yard measure, and, leaning over the counter hit right and left.

'Oh! you little monster!' exclaimed a woman, 'you have put out my babby's eye.'

There was a murmur; almost a groan. 'Whose babby's hurt?' asked Master Joseph, in a softened tone.

'Mine, sir,' said an indignant voice; 'Mary Church.'

'Oh! Mary Church, is it!' said the malicious imp; 'then I'll put Mary Church down for half a pound of best arrowroot; that's the finest thing in the world for babbies, and will cure you of bringing your cussed monkeys here, as if you all thought our shop was an hinfant school.

'Where's your book, Susan Travers? Left at home! Then you may go and fetch it. No books, no tommy. You are Jones's wife, are you? Ticket for three and sixpence out of eighteen shillings wages. Is this the only ticket you have brought? There's your money; and you may tell your husband he need not take his coat off again to go down our shaft. He must think us cussed fools! Tell him I hope he has got plenty of money to travel into Wales, for he won't have no work in England again, or my name ayn't Diggs. Who's pushing there? I'll be among you; I'll close the shop. If I do get hold of some of

you cussed women, you shan't forget it. If anybody will tell me who is pushing there, they shall have their bacon for sevenpence. Will nobody have bacon for sevenpence? Leagued together, eh? Then everybody shall have their bacon for tenpence. Two can play at that. Push again, and I'll be among you,' said the infuriated little tyrant. But the waving of the multitude, impatient, and annoyed by the weather, was not to be stilled; the movement could not be regulated; the shop was in commotion; and Master Joseph Diggs, losing all patience, jumped on the counter, and amid the shrieks of the women, sprang into the crowd. Two women fainted; others cried for their bonnets; others bemoaned their aprons; nothing, however, deterred Diggs, who kicked and cuffed and cursed in every quarter, and gave none. At last there was a general scream of horror, and a cry of 'a boy killed!'

The senior Diggs, who from his eminence had hitherto viewed the scene with unruffled complacency; who in fact, derived from these not unusual exhibitions the same agreeable excitement which a Roman emperor might have received from the combats of the circus, began to think that affairs were growing serious, and rose to counsel order and enforce amiable dispositions. Even Master Joseph was quelled by that mild voice, which would have become Augustus. It appeared to be quite true that a boy was dead. It was the little boy who, sent to get a loaf for his mother, had complained before the shop was opened of his fainting energies. He had fallen in the fray, and it was thought, to use the phrase of the comely dame who tried to rescue him, 'that he was quite smothered.'

They carried him out of the shop; the perspiration poured off him; he had no pulse. He had no friends there. 'I'll stand by the body,' said the comely dame, 'though I lose my turn.'

At this moment, Stephen Morley, for the reader has doubtless discovered that the stranger who held colloquy with the colliers was the friend of Walter Gerard, arrived at the tommy-shop, which was about half-way between the house where he had passed the night and Wodgate. He stopped, inquired, and being a man of science and some skill, decided, after examining the poor boy, that life was not extinct. Taking the elder Diggs aside, he said, 'I am the editor of the Mowbray Phalanx; I will not speak to you before these people; but I tell you fairly you and your son have been represented to me as oppressors of the people. Will it be my lot to report this death and comment on it? I trust not. There is yet time and hope.'

'What is to be done, sir?' inquired the alarmed Mr. Diggs; 'a fellow-creature in this condition—'

'Don't talk, but act,' said Morley. 'There is no time to be lost. The boy must be taken upstairs and put to bed; a warm bed, in one of your best rooms, with every comfort. I am pressed for business, but I will wait and watch over him till the crisis is passed. Come, let you and I take him in our arms, and carry him upstairs through your private door. Every minute is precious.' And so saying, Morley and the elder Diggs entered the house.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Wodgate.

ODGATE, or Wogate, as it was called on the map, was a district that in old days had been consecrated to Woden, and which appeared destined through successive ages to retain its heathen character. At the beginning of the revolutionary war, Wodgate was a sort of squatting district of the great mining region to which it was contiguous, a place where adventurers in the industry which was rapidly developing settled themselves; for though the great veins of coal and ironstone cropped up, as they phrase it, before they reached this bare and barren land, and it was thus deficient in those mineral and metallic treasures which had enriched its neighbourhood, Wodgate had advantages of its own, and of a kind which touch the fancy of the lawless. It was land without an owner; no one claimed any manorial right over it; they could build cottages without paying rent. It was a district recognised by no parish; so there were no tithes, and no meddlesome supervision. It abounded in fuel which cost nothing, for though the veins were not worth working as a source of mining profit, the soil of

Wodgate was similar in its superficial character to that of the country around. So a population gathered, and rapidly increased, in the ugliest spot in England, to which neither Nature nor art had contributed a single charm; where a tree could not be seen, a flower was unknown, where there was neither belfry nor steeple, nor a single sight or sound that could soften the heart or humanise the mind.

Whatever may have been the cause, whether, as not unlikely, the original squatters brought with them some traditionary skill, or whether their isolated and unchequered existence concentrated their energies on their craft, the fact is certain, that the inhabitants of Wodgate early acquired a celebrity as skilful workmen. This reputation so much increased, and in time spread so far, that, for more than a quarter of a century, both in their skill and the economy of their labour, they have been unmatched throughout the country. As manufacturers of ironmongery, they carry the palm from the whole district; as founders of brass and workers of steel, they fear none; while, as nailers and locksmiths, their fame has spread even to the European markets, whither their most skilful workmen have frequently been invited.

Invited in vain! No wages can tempt the Wodgate man from his native home, that squatters' seat which soon assumed the form of a large village, and then in turn soon expanded into a town, and at the present moment numbers its population by swarming thousands, lodged in the most miserable tenements in the most hideous burgh in the ugliest country in the world.

But it has its enduring spell. Notwithstanding the spread of its civic prosperity, it has lost none of the

characteristics of its original society; on the contrary, it has zealously preserved them. There are no landlords, head-lessees, main-masters, or butties in Wodgate. No church there has yet raised its spire; and, as if the jealous spirit of Woden still haunted his ancient temple, even the conventicle scarcely dares show its humble front in some obscure corner. There is no municipality, no magistrate; there are no local acts, no vestries, no schools of any kind. The streets are never cleaned; every man lights his own house; nor does any one know anything except his business.

More than this, at Wodgate a factory or large establishment of any kind is unknown. Here labour reigns supreme. Its division indeed is favoured by their manners, but the interference or influence of mere capital is instantly resisted. The business of Wodgate is carried on by master workmen in their own houses, each of whom possesses an unlimited number of what they call apprentices, by whom their affairs are principally conducted, and whom they treat as the Mamlouks treated the Egyptians.

These master workmen indeed form a powerful aristocracy, nor is it possible to conceive one apparently more oppressive. They are ruthless tyrants; they habitually inflict upon their subjects punishments more grievous than the slave population of our colonies were ever visited with; not content with beating them with sticks or flogging them with knotted ropes, they are in the habit of felling them with hammers, or cutting their heads open with a file or lock. The most usual punishment, however, or rather stimulus to increase exertion, is to pull an apprentice's ears till they run with blood. These youths, too, are

worked for sixteen and even twenty hours a day; they are often sold by one master to another; they are fed on carrion, and they sleep in lofts or cellars: yet, whether it be that they are hardened by brutality, and really unconscious of their degradation and unusual sufferings, or whether they are supported by the belief that their day to be masters and oppressors will surely arrive, the aristocracy of Wodgate is by no means so unpopular as the aristocracy of most other places.

In the first place, it is a real aristocracy; it is privileged, but it does something for its privileges. It is distinguished from the main body not merely by name. It is the most knowing class at Wodgate; it possesses indeed in its way complete knowledge; and it imparts in its manner a certain quantity of it to those whom it guides. Thus it is an aristocracy that leads, and therefore a fact. Moreover, the social system of Wodgate is not an unvarying course of infinite toil. Their plan is to work hard, but not always. They seldom exceed four days of labour in the week. On Sunday the masters begin to drink; for the apprentices there is dog-fighting without any stint. On Monday and Tuesday the whole population of Wodgate is drunk; of all stations, ages, and sexes; even babes who should be at the breast; for they are drammed with Godfrey's Cordial. Here is relaxation, excitement; if less vice otherwise than might be at first anticipated, we must remember that excesses are checked by poverty of blood and constant exhaustion. Scanty food and hard labour are in their way, if not exactly moralists, a tolerably good police.

There are no others at Wodgate to preach or to control. It is not that the people are immoral, for

immorality implies some forethought; or ignorant, for ignorance is relative; but they are animals; unconscious; their minds a blank; and their worst actions only the impulse of a gross or savage instinct. There are many in this town who are ignorant of their very names; very few who can spell them. It is rare that you meet with a young person who knows his own age; rarer to find the boy who has seen a book, or the girl who has seen a flower. Ask them the name of their sovereign, and they will give you an unmeaning stare; ask them the name of their religion, and they will laugh: who rules them on earth, or who can save them in heaven, are alike mysteries to them.

Such was the population with whom Morley was about to mingle. Wodgate had the appearance of a vast squalid suburb. As you advanced, leaving behind you long lines of little dingy tenements, with infants lying about the road, you expected every moment to emerge into some streets, and encounter buildings bearing some correspondence, in their size and comfort, to the considerable population swarming and busied around you. Nothing of the kind. There were no public buildings of any sort; no churches, chapels, town-hall, institute, theatre; and the principal streets in the heart of the town in which were situate the coarse and grimy shops, though formed by houses of a greater elevation than the preceding, were equally narrow, and if possible more dirty. At every fourth or fifth house, alleys seldom above a yard wide, and streaming with filth, opened out of the street. These were crowded with dwellings of various size, while from the principal court often branched out a number of smaller alleys, or rather narrow passages, than which nothing can be conceived more close and

squalid and obscure. Here, during the days of business, the sound of the hammer and the file never ceased, amid gutters of abomination, and piles of foulness, and stagnant pools of filth; reservoirs of leprosy and plague, whose exhalations were sufficient to taint the atmosphere of the whole kingdom, and fill the country with fever and pestilence.

A lank and haggard youth, rickety, smoke-dried, and black with his craft, was sitting on the threshold of a miserable hovel, and working at the file. Behind him stood a stunted and meagre girl, with a back like a grasshopper; a deformity occasioned by the displacement of the bladebone, and prevalent among the girls of Wodgate from the cramping posture of their usual toil. Her long melancholy visage and vacant stare at Morley, as he passed, attracted his notice, and it occurring to him that the opportunity was convenient to inquire something of the individual of whom he was in search, he stopped and addressed the workman.

'Do you happen to know, friend, a person here or hereabouts by name Hatton?'

'Hatton!' said the youth, looking up with a grin, yet still continuing his labour, 'I should think I did!'

'Well, that's fortunate; you can tell me something about him?'

'Do you see this here?' said the youth, still grinning, and, letting the file drop from his distorted and knotty hand, he pointed to a deep scar that crossed his forehead: 'he did that.'

'An accident?'

'Very like. An accident that often happened. I should like to have a crown for every time he has cut my head open. He cut it open once with a key,

and twice with a lock; he knocked the corner of a lock into my head twice, once with a bolt, and once with a shut; you know what that is; the thing what runs into the staple. He hit me on the head with a hammer once. That was a blow! I fell away that time. When I came to, master had stopped the blood with some fur off his hat. I had to go on with my work immediately; master said I should do my stint if I worked till twelve o'clock at night. Many's the ash stick he has broken on my body; sometimes the weals remained on me for a week; he cut my eyelid open once with a nutstick; cut a regular hole in it, and it bled all over the files I was working at. He has pulled my ears sometimes that I thought they must come off in his hand. But all this was a mere nothin' to this here cut; that was serous; and if I hadn't got thro' that, they do say there must have been a crowner's quest; though I think that gammon, for old Tugsford did for one of his prentices, and the body was never found. And now you ask me if I know Hatton? I should think I did!' And the lank, haggard youth laughed merrily, as if he had been recounting a series of the happiest adventures.

'But is there no redress for such iniquitous oppression?' said Morley, who had listened with astonishment to this complacent statement. 'Is there no magistrate to apply to?'

'No, no,' said the filer, with an air of obvious pride; 'we don't have no magistrates at Wodgate. We've got a constable, and there was a prentice, who, coz his master laid it on only with a seat rod, went over to Ramborough and got a warrant. He fetched the summons himself, and giv it to the con-

stable, but he never served it. That's why they has a constable here.'

'I am sorry,' said Morley, 'that I have affairs with such a wretch as this Hatton.'

'You'll find him a wery hearty sort of man,' said the filer, 'if he don't hap to be in drink. He's a little robustious then, but take him all in all for a master, you may go further and fare worse.'

'What! this monster!'

'Lord bless you! it's his way, that's all; we be a queer set here; but he has his pints. Give him a lock to make, and you won't have your box picked; he's wery lib'ral too in the wittals. Never had horseflesh the whole time I was with him; they has nothin' else at Tugsford's; never had no sick cow except when meat was very dear. He always put his face agin still-born calves; he used to say he liked his boys to have meat that was born alive, and killed alive. By which token there never was any sheep which had bust in the head sold in our court. And then sometimes he would give us a treat of fish, when it had been four or five days in town, and not sold. No, give the devil his due, say I. There never was no want for anything at meals with the Bishop, except time to eat them in.'

'And why do you call him the Bishop?'

'That's his name and authority; for he's the governor here over all of us. And it has always been so that Wodgate has been governed by a bishop; because, as we have no church, we will have as good. And by this token that this day se'nnight, the day my time was up, he married me to this here young lady. She is of the Baptist school religion, and wanted us to be tied by her clergyman, but all the

lads that served their time with me were married by the Bishop, and many a more, and I saw no call to do no otherwise. So he sprinkled salt over a gridiron, read "Our Father" backwards, and wrote our name in a book: and we were spliced; but I didn't do it rashly, did I, Suky, by the token that we had kept company for two years, and there isn't a gal in all Wodgate what handles a file like Sue.'

'And what is your name, my good fellow?'

'They call me Tummas, but I ayn't got no second name; but now I am married I mean to take my wife's, for she has been baptised, and so has got two.'

'Yes, sir,' said the girl with the vacant face and the back like a grasshopper; 'I be a reg'lar born Christian and my mother afore me, and that's what few gals in the Yard can say. Thomas will take to it himself when work is slack; and he believes now in our Lord and Saviour Pontius Pilate, who was crucified to save our sins; and in Moses, Goliath, and the rest of the Apostles.'

'Ah! me,' thought Morley, 'and could not they spare one missionary from Tahiti for their fellow countrymen at Wodgate!'

CHAPTER XXVII.

Gerard's New Neighbour.

THE summer twilight had faded into sweet night; the young and star-attended moon glittered like a sickle in the deep purple sky; of all the luminous host Hesperus alone was visible; and a breeze, that bore the last embrace of the flowers by the sun, moved languidly and fitfully over the still and odorous earth.

The moonbeam fell upon the roof and garden of Gerard. It suffused the cottage with its brilliant light, except where the dark depth of the embowered porch defied its entry. All around the beds of flowers and herbs spread sparkling and defined. You could trace the minutest walk; almost distinguish every leaf. Now and then there came a breath, and the sweet-peas murmured in their sleep; or the roses rustled, as if they were afraid they were about to be roused from their lightsome dreams. Farther on the fruit trees caught the splendour of the night; and looked like a troop of sultanas taking their garden air, when the eye of man could not profane them, and laden with jewels. There were apples that rivalled rubies;

pears of topaz tint; a whole paraphernalia of plums, some purple as the amethyst, others blue and brilliant as the sapphire; an emerald here, and now a golden drop that gleamed like the yellow diamond of Gengis Khan.

Within, was the scene less fair? A single lamp shed over the chamber a soft and sufficient light. The library of Stephen Morley had been removed, but the place of his volumes had been partly supplied, for the shelves were far from being empty. Their contents were of no ordinary character: many volumes of devotion, some of Church history, one or two on ecclesiastical art, several works of our elder dramatists, some good reprints of our chronicles, and many folios of Church music, which last indeed amounted to a remarkable collection. There was no musical instrument of any kind, however, in the room, and the only change in its furniture, since we last visited the room of Gerard, was the presence of a long-backed chair of antique form, beautifully embroidered, and a portrait of a female saint over the mantel-piece. As for Gerard himself, he sat with his head leaning on his arm, which rested on the table, while he listened with great interest to a book which was read to him by his daughter, at whose feet lay the fiery and faithful bloodhound.

'So you see, my father,' said Sybil with animation, and dropping her book, which, however, her hand did not relinquish, 'even then all was not lost. The stout earl retired beyond the Trent, and years and reigns elapsed before this part of the island accepted their laws and customs.'

'I see,' said her father, 'and yet I cannot help wishing that Harold——' Here the hound, hearing

his name, suddenly rose and looked at Gerard, who, smiling, patted him and said, 'We were not talking of thee, good sir, but of thy great namesake; but ne'er mind, a live dog they say is worth a dead king.'

'Ah! why have we not such a man now,' said Sybil, 'to protect the people? Were I a prince I know no career that I should deem so great.'

'But Stephen says no,' said Gerard: 'he says that these great men have never made use of us but as tools; and that the people never can have their rights until they produce competent champions from their own order.'

'But then Stephen does not want to recall the past,' said Sybil with a kind of sigh; 'he wishes to create the future.'

'The past is a dream,' said Gerard.

'And what is the future?' inquired Sybil.

'Alack! I know not; but I often wish the battle of Hastings were to be fought over again, and I was going to have a hand in it.'

'Ah! my father,' said Sybil with a mournful smile, 'there is ever your fatal specific of physical force. Even Stephen is against physical force, with all his odd fancies.'

'All very true,' said Gerard, smiling with good nature; 'but all the same when I was coming home a few days ago, and stopped awhile on the bridge and chanced to see myself in the stream, I could not help fancying that my Maker had fashioned these limbs rather to hold a lance or draw a bow than to supervise a shuttle or a spindle.'

'Yet with the shuttle and the spindle we may redeem our race,' said Sybil with animation, 'if we

could only form the minds that move those peaceful weapons. Oh! my father, I will believe that moral power is irresistible, or where are we to look for hope?'

Gerard shook his head with his habitual sweet good-tempered smile. 'Ah!' said he, 'what can we do? They have got the land, and the land governs the people. The Norman knew that, Sybil, as you just read. If indeed we had our rights, one might do something; but I don't know; I dare say if I had our land again, I should be as bad as the rest.'

'Oh! no, my father,' exclaimed Sybil with energy, 'never, never! Your thoughts would be as princely as your lot. What a leader of the people you would make!'

Harold sprang up suddenly and growled.

'Hush!' said Gerard; 'some one knocks:' and he rose and left the room. Sybil heard voices and broken sentences: 'You'll excuse me:' 'I take it kindly:' 'So we are neighbours.' And then her father returned, ushering in a person, and saying, 'Here is my friend Mr. Franklin, that I was speaking of, Sybil, who is going to be our neighbour; down, Harold, down!' and he presented to his daughter the companion of Mr. St. Lys in that visit to the hand-loom weaver when she had herself met the vicar of Mowbray.

Sybil rose, and letting her book drop gently on the table, received Egremont with composure and native grace. It is civilisation that makes us awkward, for it gives us an uncertain position. Perplexed, we take refuge in pretence; and embarrassed, we seek a resource in affectation. The Bedouin and the red Indian never lose their presence of mind; and

the wife of a peasant, when you enter her cottage, often greets you with a propriety of mien which favourably contrasts with your reception by some grand dame in some grand assembly, meeting her guests alternately with a caricature of courtesy or an exaggeration of supercilious self-control.

'I dare say,' said Egremont, bowing to Sybil, 'you have seen our poor friend the weaver since we met there.'

'The day I quitted Mowbray,' said Sybil. 'They are not without friends.'

'Ah! you have met my daughter before.'

'On a mission of grace,' said Egremont.

'And I suppose you found the town not very pleasant, Mr. Franklin,' returned Gerard.

'No; I could not stand it, the nights were so close. Besides, I have a great accumulation of notes, and I fancied I could reduce them into a report more efficiently in comparative seclusion. So I have got a room near here, with a little garden, not so pretty as yours; but still a garden is something; and if I want any additional information, why, after all, Mowbray is only a walk.'

'You say well, and have done wisely. Besides, you have such late hours in London, and hard work. Some country air will do you all the good in the world. That gallery must be tiresome. Do you use shorthand?'

'A sort of shorthand of my own,' said Egremont. 'I trust a good deal to my memory.'

'Ah! you are young. My daughter also has a wonderful memory. For my own part, there are many things which I am not sorry to forget.'

'You see I took you at your word, neighbour,'

said Egremont. 'When one has been at work the whole day one feels a little lonely towards night.'

'Very true; and I dare say you find desk work sometimes dull; I never could make anything of it myself. I can manage a book well enough, if it be well written, and on points I care for; but I would sooner listen than read any time,' said Gerard. 'Indeed, I should be right glad to see the minstrel and the story-teller going their rounds again. It would be easy after a day's work, when one has not, as I have now, a good child to read to me.'

'This volume?' said Egremont, drawing his chair to the table, and looking at Sybil, who intimated assent by a nod.

'Ah! it's a fine book,' said Gerard, 'though on a sad subject.'

'The History of the Conquest of England by the Normans,' said Egremont, reading the title page, on which also was written, 'Ursula Trafford to Sybil Gerard.'

'You know it?' said Sybil.

'Only by fame.'

'Perhaps the subject may not interest you so much as it does us,' said Sybil.

'It must interest all, and all alike,' said her father; 'for we are divided between the conquerors and the conquered.'

'But do not you think,' said Egremont, 'that such a distinction has long ceased to exist?'

'In what degree?' asked Gerard. 'Many circumstances of oppression have doubtless gradually disappeared; but that has arisen from the change of manners, not from any political recognition of their injustice. The same course of time which has removed

many enormities, more shocking, however, to our modern feelings than to those who devised and endured them, has simultaneously removed many alleviating circumstances. If the mere baron's grasp be not so ruthless, the champion we found in the Church is no longer so ready. The spirit of conquest has adapted itself to the changing circumstances of ages, and, however its results vary in form, in degree they are much the same.'

'But how do they show themselves?'

'In many circumstances, which concern many classes; but I speak of those which touch my own order; and therefore I say at once, in the degradation of the people.'

'But are the people so degraded?'

'There is more serfdom in England now than at any time since the Conquest. I speak of what passes under my eyes daily when I say that those who labour can as little choose or change their masters now as when they were born thralls. There are great bodies of the working classes of this country nearer the condition of brutes than they have been at any time since the Conquest. Indeed, I see nothing to distinguish them from brutes, except that their morals are inferior. Incest and infanticide are as common among them as among the lower animals. The domestic principle wanes weaker and weaker every year in England; nor can we wonder at it, when there is no comfort to cheer and no sentiment to hallow the home.'

'I was reading a work the other day,' said Egremont, 'that statistically proved that the general condition of the people was much better at this moment than it had been at any known period of history.'

'Ah! yes, I know that style of speculation,' said Gerard; 'your gentleman who reminds you that a working man now has a pair of cotton stockings, and that Harry the Eighth himself was not as well off. At any rate, the condition of classes must be judged of by the age, and by their relation with each other. One need not dwell on that. I deny the premises. I deny that the condition of the main body is better now than at any other period of our history; that it is as good as it has been at several. I say, for instance, the people were better clothed, better lodged, and better fed just before the War of the Roses than they are at this moment. We know how an English peasant lived in those times: he ate flesh every day, he never drank water, was well housed, and clothed in stout woollens. Nor are the Chronicles necessary to tell us this. The Acts of Parliament, from the Plantagenets to the Tudors, teach us alike the price of provisions and the rate of wages; and we see in a moment that the wages of those days brought as much sustenance and comfort as a reasonable man could desire.'

'I know how deeply you feel upon this subject,' said Egremont, turning to Sybil.

'Indeed it is the only subject that ever engages my thought,' she replied, 'except one.'

'And that one?'

'Is to see the people once more kneel before our blessed Lady,' replied Sybil.

'Look at the average term of life,' said Gerard, coming unintentionally to the relief of Egremont, who was a little embarrassed. 'The average term of life in this district among the working classes is seventeen. What think you of that? Of the infants born in

Mowbray, more than a moiety die before the age of five.'

'And yet,' said Egremont, 'in old days they had terrible pestilences.'

'But they touched all alike,' said Gerard. 'We have more pestilence now in England than we ever had, but it only reaches the poor. You never hear of it. Why, typhus alone takes every year from the dwellings of the artisan and peasant a population equal to that of the whole county of Westmoreland. This goes on every year, but the representatives of the conquerors are not touched; it is the descendants of the conquered alone who are the victims.'

It sometimes seems to me,' said Sybil despondingly, 'that nothing short of the descent of angels can save the people of this kingdom.'

'I sometimes think I hear a little bird,' said Gerard, 'who sings that the long frost may yet break up. I have a friend, him of whom I was speaking to you the other day, who has his remedies.'

'But Stephen Morley does not believe in angels,' said Sybil with a sigh; 'and I have no faith in his plan.'

'He believes that God will help those who help themselves,' said Gerard.

'And I believe,' said Sybil, 'that those only can help themselves whom God helps.'

All this time Egremont was sitting at the table, with a book in his hand, gazing fitfully and occasionally with an air of absence on its title page, whereon was written the name of its owner. Suddenly he said 'Sybil.'

'Yes,' said the daughter of Gerard, with an air of some astonishment.

'I beg your pardon,' said Egremont blushing; 'I was reading your name. I thought I was reading it to myself. Sybil Gerard! What a beautiful name is Sybil!'

'My mother's name,' said Gerard; 'and my grandame's name, and a name, I believe, that has been about our hearth as long as our race; and that's a very long time indeed,' he added, smiling, 'for we were tall men in King John's reign, as I have heard say.'

'Yours is indeed an old family.'

'Ay, we have some English blood in our veins, though peasants and the sons of peasants. But there was one of us who drew a bow at Azincourt; and I have heard greater things, but I believe they are old wives' tales.'

'At least we have nothing left,' said Sybil, 'but our old faith; and that we have clung to through good report and evil report.'

'And now,' said Gerard, 'I rise with the lark, good neighbour Franklin; but before you go, Sybil will sing to us a requiem that I love: it stills the spirit before we sink into the slumber which may this night be death, and which one day must be.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Morning Stroll.

A BLOOM was spread over the morning sky. A soft golden light bathed with its fresh beam the bosom of the valley, except where a delicate haze, rather than a mist, still partially lingered over the river, which yet occasionally gleamed and sparkled in the sunshine. A sort of shadowy lustre suffused the landscape, which, though distinct, was mitigated in all its features: the distant woods, the clumps of tall trees that rose about the old grey bridge, the cottage chimneys that sent their smoke into the blue still air, amid their clustering orchards and gardens of flowers and herbs.

Ah! what is there so fresh and joyous as a summer morn! that spring-time of the day, when the brain is bright, and the heart is brave; the season of daring and of hope; the renovating hour!

Forth from his cottage room came the brother of Lord Marney, to feel the vigorous bliss of life amid sunshiny gardens and the voices of bees and birds.

'Ah! this is delicious!' he felt. 'This is existence! Thank God I am here; that I have quitted for ever

that formal and heartless Marney. Were it not for my mother I would remain Mr. Franklin for ever. Would I were indeed a journalist, provided I always had a mission to the vale of Mowbray. Or anything, so that I were ever here. As companions, independently of everything else, they are superior to any that I have been used to. Why do these persons interest me? They feel and they think: two habits that have quite gone out of fashion, if ever they existed, among my friends. And that polish of manners, that studied and factitious refinement, which is to compensate for the heartlessness or the stupidity we are doomed to; is my host of last night deficient in that refinement? If he do want our conventional discipline, he has a native breeding which far excels it. I observe no word or action which is not prompted by that fine feeling which is the sure source of good taste. This Gerard appears to me a real genuine man; full of knowledge worked out by his own head; with large yet wholesome sympathies; and a deuced deal better educated than Lord de Mowbray or my brother; and they do occasionally turn over a book, which is not the habit of our set.

'And his daughter; ay, his daughter! There is something almost sublime about that young girl, yet strangely sweet withal; a tone so lofty combined with such simplicity is very rare. For there is no affectation of enthusiasm about her; nothing exaggerated, nothing rhapsodical. Her dark eyes and lustrous face, and the solemn sweetness of her thrilling voice, they haunt me; they have haunted me from the first moment I encountered her like a spirit amid the ruins of our Abbey. And I am one of "the family of sacrilege." If she knew that! And I am one of the con-

quering class she denounces. If also she knew that! Ah! there is much to know! Above all, the future. Away! the tree of knowledge is the tree of death. I will have no thought that is not as bright and lovely as this morn.'

He went forth from his little garden, and strolled along the road in the direction of the cottage of Gerard, which was about three quarters of a mile distant. You might see almost as far; the sunshiny road a little winding and rising a very slight ascent. The cottage itself was hid by its trees. While Egremont was still musing of one who lived under that roof, he beheld in the distance Sybil.

She was springing along with a quick and airy step. Her black dress displayed her undulating and elastic figure. Her little foot bounded from the earth with a merry air. A long rosary hung at her side; and her head was partly covered with a hood which descended just over her shoulders. She seemed gay, for Harold kept running before her with a frolicsome air, and then, returning to his mistress, danced about her, and almost overpowered her with his gambols.

'I salute thee, holy sister,' said Egremont.

'Oh! is not this a merry morn?' she exclaimed, with a bright and happy face.

'I feel it as you. And whither do you go?'

'I go to the convent; I pay my first visit to our Superior since I left them.'

'Not very long ago,' said Egremont, with a smile, and turning with her.

'It seems so,' said Sybil.

They walked on together; Sybil, glad as the hour, noticing a thousand cheerful sights, speaking to her

dog in her ringing voice, as he gambolled before them, or seized her garments in his mouth, and ever and anon bounded away and then returned, looking up in his mistress's face to inquire whether he had been wanted in his absence.

'What a pity it is that your father's way each morning lies up the valley,' said Egremont; 'he would be your companion to Mowbray.'

'Ah! but I am so happy that he has not to work in a town,' said Sybil. 'He is not made to be cooped up in a hot factory in a smoky street. At least he labours among the woods and waters. And the Traffords are such good people! So kind to him and to all.'

'You love your father very much.'

She looked at him a little surprised; and then her sweet serious face broke into a smile, and she said, 'And is that strange?'

'I think not,' said Egremont; 'I am inclined to love him myself.'

'Ah! you win my heart,' said Sybil, 'when you praise him. I think that is the real reason why I like Stephen; for otherwise he is always saying something with which I cannot agree, which I disapprove; and yet he is so good to my father!'

'You speak of Mr. Morley—'

'Oh! we don't call him "Mr.,"' said Sybil, slightly laughing.

'I mean Stephen Morley,' said Egremont, recalling his position, 'whom I met in Marney Abbey. He is very clever, is he not?'

'He is a great writer and a great student; and what he is he has made himself. I hear, too, that you follow the same pursuit,' said Sybil.

'But I am not a great writer or a great student,' said Egremont.

'Whatever you be, I trust,' said Sybil, in a more serious tone, 'that you will never employ the talents that God has given you against the people.'

'I have come here to learn something of their condition,' said Egremont. 'That is not to be done in a great city like London. We all of us live too much in a circle. You will assist me, I am sure,' added Egremont; 'your spirit will animate me. You told me last night that there was no other subject, except one, which ever occupied your thoughts.'

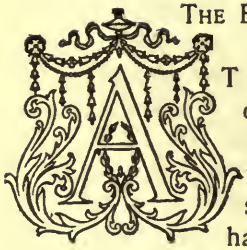
'Yes,' said Sybil, 'I have lived under two roofs, only two roofs; and each has given me a great idea; the convent and the cottage. One has taught me the degradation of my faith, the other of my race. You should not wonder, therefore, that my heart is concentrated on the Church and the people.'

'But there are other ideas,' said Egremont, 'that might equally be entitled to your thought.'

'I feel these are enough,' said Sybil; 'too great, as it is, for my brain.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Bishop of Wodgate.



T THE end of a court in Wodgate, of rather larger dimensions than usual in that town, was a high and many-windowed house, of several stories in height, which had been added to it at intervals. It was in a most dilapidated state; the principal part occupied as a nail-workshop, where a great number of heavy iron machines were working in every room on each floor; the building itself in so shattered a condition that every part of it creaked and vibrated with their motion. The flooring was so broken that in many places one could look down through the gaping and rotten planks, while the upper floors from time to time had been shored up with props.

This was the palace of the Bishop of Wodgate, and here, with his arms bare and black, he worked at those locks which defied any skeleton key that was not made by himself. He was a short, thickset man, powerfully made, with brawny arms disproportionately short even for his height, and with a countenance, as far as one could judge of a face so disfigured by grimy toil, rather brutal than savage.

His choice apprentices, full of admiration and terror, worked about him; lank and haggard youths, who never for an instant dared to raise their dingy faces and lack-lustre eyes from their ceaseless labour. On each side of their master, seated on a stool higher than the rest, was an urchin of not more than four or five years of age, serious and demure, and as if proud of his eminent position, and working incessantly at his little file: these were two sons of the bishop.

'Now, boys,' said the bishop, in a hoarse, harsh voice, 'steady, there; steady. There's a file what don't sing; can't deceive my ear; I know all their voices. Don't let me find that 'un out, or I won't walk into him, won't I? Ayn't you lucky, boys, to have reg'lar work like this, and the best of prog! It worn't my lot, I can tell you that. Give me that shut, you there, Scrubbynose, can't you move? Look sharp, or I won't move you, won't I? Steady, steady! All right! That's music. Where will you hear music like twenty files all working at once! You ought to be happy, boys, oughtn't you? Won't there be a treat of fish after this, that's all! Hulloa, there, you red-haired varmint, what are you looking after? Three boys looking about them; what's all this? won't I be among you?' and he sprang forward and seized the luckless ears of the first apprentice he could get hold of, and wrung them till the blood spouted forth.

'Please, bishop,' sang out the boy, 'it worn't my fault. Here's a man what wants you.'

'Who wants me?' said the bishop, looking round, and he caught the figure of Morley, who had just entered the shop.

'Well, what's your will? Locks or nails?'

'Neither,' said Morley; 'I wish to see a man named Hatton.'

'Well, you see a man named Hatton,' said the bishop; 'and now what do you want of him?'

'I should like to say a word to you alone,' said Morley.

'Hem! I should like to know who is to finish this lock, and look after my boys! If it's an order, let's have it at once.'

'It is not an order,' said Morley.

'Then I don't want to hear nothing about it,' said the bishop.

'It's about family matters,' said Morley.

'Ah!' said Hatton, eagerly, 'what, do you come from him?'

'It may be,' said Morley.

Upon this the bishop, looking up to the ceiling of the room in which there were several large chinks, began calling out lustily to some unseen person above, and immediately was replied to in a shrill voice of objurgation, demanding in peremptory words, interlarded with many oaths, what he wanted. His reply called down his unseen correspondent, who soon entered his workshop. It was the awful presence of Mrs. Hatton; a tall bearded virago, with a file in her hand, for that seemed the distinctive arm of the house, and eyes flashing with unbridled power.

'Look after the boys,' said Hatton, 'for I have business.'

'Won't I?' said Mrs. Hatton; and a thrill of terror pervaded the assembly. All the files moved in regular melody; no one dared to raise his face; even her two young children looked still more serious and de-

mure. Not that any being present flattered himself for an instant that the most sedulous attention on his part could prevent an outbreak; all that each aspired to, and wildly hoped, was that he might not be the victim singled out to have his head cut open, or his eye knocked out, or his ears half pulled off by the being who was the terror not only of the workshop, but of Wodgate itself; their bishop's gentle wife.

In the meantime, that worthy, taking Morley into a room where there were no machines at work except those made of iron, said, 'Well, what have you brought me?'

'In the first place,' said Morley, 'I would speak to you of your brother.'

'I concluded that,' said Hatton, 'when you spoke of family matters bringing you here; he is the only relation I have in this world, and therefore it must be of him.'

'It is of him,' said Morley.

'Has he sent anything?'

'Hem!' said Morley, who was by nature a diplomatist, and instantly comprehended his position, being himself pumped when he came to pump; but he resolved not to precipitate the affair. 'How late is it since you heard from him?' he asked.

'Why, I suppose you know,' said Hatton; 'I heard as usual.'

'From his usual place?' inquired Morley.

'I wish you would tell me where that is,' said Hatton, eagerly.

'Why, he writes to you?'

'Blank letters; never had a line except once, and that is more than twelve year ago. He sends me a

twenty-pound note every Christmas; and that is all I know about him.'

'Then he is rich, and well to do in the world?' said Morley.

'Why, don't you know?' said Hatton; 'I thought you came from him!'

'I came about him. I wished to know whether he were alive, and that you have been able to inform me: and where he was; and that you have not been able to inform me.'

'Why, you're a regular muff!' said the bishop.

CHAPTER XXX.

Another View of the People.

A FEW days after his morning walk with Sybil, it was agreed that Egremont should visit Mr. Trafford's factory, which he had expressed a great desire to inspect. Gerard always left his cottage at break of dawn, and as Sybil had not yet paid her accustomed visit to her friend and patron, who was the employer of her father, it was arranged that Egremont should accompany her at a later and more convenient hour in the morning, and then that they should all return together.

The factory was about a mile distant from their cottage, which belonged indeed to Mr. Trafford, and had been built by him. He was the younger son of a family that had for centuries been planted in the land, but who, not satisfied with the factitious consideration with which society compensates the junior members of a territorial house for their entailed poverty, had availed himself of some opportunities that offered themselves, and had devoted his energies to those new sources of wealth that were unknown to his ancestors. His operations at first had been ex-

tremely limited, like his fortunes; but with a small capital, though his profits were not considerable, he at least gained experience. With gentle blood in his veins, and old English feelings, he imbibed, at an early period of his career, a correct conception of the relations which should subsist between the employer and the employed. He felt that between them there should be other ties than the payment and the receipt of wages.

A distant and childless relative, who made him a visit, pleased with his energy and enterprise, and touched by the development of his social views, left him a considerable sum, at a moment, too, when a great opening was offered to manufacturing capital and skill. Trafford, schooled in rigid fortunes, and formed by struggle, if not by adversity, was ripe for the occasion, and equal to it. He became very opulent, and he lost no time in carrying into life and being the plans which he had brooded over in the years when his good thoughts were limited to dreams. On the banks of his native Mowe he had built a factory, which was now one of the marvels of the district; one might almost say, of the country: a single room, spreading over nearly two acres, and holding more than two thousand workpeople. The roof of groined arches, lighted by ventilating domes at the height of eighteen feet, was supported by hollow cast-iron columns, through which the drainage of the roof was effected. The height of the ordinary rooms in which the workpeople in manufactories are engaged, is not more than from nine to eleven feet; and these are built in stories, the heat and effluvia of the lower rooms communicated to those above, and the difficulty of ventilation insurmountable. At Mr.

Trafford's, by an ingenious process, not unlike that which is practised in the House of Commons, the ventilation was also carried on from below, so that the whole building was kept at a steady temperature, and little susceptible to atmospheric influence. The physical advantages of thus carrying on the whole work in one chamber are great: in the improved health of the people, the security against dangerous accidents to women and youth, and the reduced fatigue resulting from not having to ascend and descend, and carry materials to the higher rooms. But the moral advantages resulting from superior inspection and general observation are not less important: the child works under the eye of the parent, the parent under that of the superior workman; the inspector or employer at a glance can behold all.

When the workpeople of Mr. Trafford left his factory they were not forgotten. Deeply had he pondered on the influence of the employer on the health and content of his workpeople. He knew well that the domestic virtues are dependent on the existence of a home, and one of his first efforts had been to build a village where every family might be well lodged. Though he was the principal proprietor, and proud of that character, he nevertheless encouraged his workmen to purchase the fee: there were some who had saved sufficient money to effect this; proud of their house and their little garden, and of the horticultural society, where its produce permitted them to be annual competitors. In every street there was a well: behind the factory were the public baths; the schools were under the direction of the perpetual curate of the church, which Mr. Trafford, though a Roman Catholic, had raised and endowed. In the

midst of this village, surrounded by beautiful gardens, which gave an impulse to the horticulture of the community, was the house of Trafford himself, who comprehended his position too well to withdraw himself with vulgar exclusiveness from his real dependents, but recognised the baronial principle, reviving in a new form, and adapted to the softer manners and more ingenious circumstances of the times.

And what was the influence of such an employer and such a system of employment on the morals and manners of the employed? Great; infinitely beneficial. The connection of a labourer with his place of work, whether agricultural or manufacturing, is itself a vast advantage. Proximity to the employer brings cleanliness and order, because it brings observation and encouragement. In the settlement of Trafford crime was positively unknown, and offences were slight. There was not a single person in the village of a reprobate character. The men were well clad; the women had a blooming cheek; drunkenness was unknown; while the moral condition of the softer sex was proportionately elevated.

The vast form of the spreading factory, the roofs and gardens of the village, the Tudor chimneys of the house of Trafford, the spire of the gothic church, with the sparkling river and the sylvan background, came rather suddenly on the sight of Egremont. They were indeed in the pretty village street before he was aware he was about to enter it. Some beautiful children rushed out of a cottage and flew to Sybil, crying out, 'the queen, the queen;' one clinging to her dress, another seizing her arm, and a third, too small to struggle, pouting out its lips to be embraced.

'My subjects,' said Sybil laughing, as she greeted them all; and then they ran away to announce to others that their queen had arrived.

Others came; beautiful and young. As Sybil and Egremont walked along, the race too tender for labour seemed to spring out of every cottage to greet their 'queen.' Her visits had been rare of late, but they were never forgotten; they formed epochs in the village annals of the children, some of whom knew only by tradition the golden age when Sybil Gerard lived at the great house, and daily glanced like a spirit among their homes, smiling and met with smiles, blessing and ever blessed.

'And here,' she said to Egremont, 'I must bid you good-bye; and this little boy,' touching gently on his head a serious urchin who had never left her side for a moment, proud of his position, and holding tight her hand with all his strength, 'this little boy shall be your guide. It is not a hundred yards. Now, Pierce, you must take Mr. Franklin to the factory, and ask for Mr. Gerard.' And she went her way.

They had not separated five minutes, when the sound of whirling wheels caught the ear of Egremont, and, looking round, he saw a cavalcade of great pretension rapidly approaching; dames and cavaliers on horseback; a brilliant equipage, postilions and four horses; a crowd of grooms. Egremont stood aside. The horsemen and horsewomen caracoled gaily by him; proudly swept on the sparkling barouche; the saucy grooms pranced in his face. Their masters and mistresses were not strangers to him: he recognised with some dismay the liveries, and then the arms of Lord de Mowbray, and caught the cold, proud countenance of Lady Joan, and the flexible visage of Lady

Maud, both on horseback, and surrounded by admiring cavaliers.

Egremont flattered himself that he had not been recognised, and, dismissing his little guide, instead of proceeding to the factory, he sauntered away in an opposite direction, and made a visit to the Church.

The wife of Trafford embraced Sybil, and then embraced her again. She seemed as happy as the children of the village, that the joy of her roof, as of so many others, had returned to them, though only for a few hours. Her husband, she said, had just quitted the house; he was obliged to go to the factory to receive a great and distinguished party who were expected this morning, having written to him several days before for permission to view the works. 'We expect them to lunch here afterwards,' said Mrs. Trafford, a refined woman, but unused to society, and who rather trembled at the ceremony; 'Oh! do stay with me, Sybil, to receive them.'

This intimation so much alarmed Sybil that she rose as soon as was practicable; and saying that she had some visits to make in the village, she promised to return when Mrs. Trafford was less engaged.

An hour elapsed; there was a loud ring at the hall-door; the great and distinguished party had arrived. Mrs. Trafford prepared for the interview, and looked a little frightened as the doors opened, and her husband ushered in and presented to her Lord and Lady de Mowbray, their daughters, Lady Firebrace, Mr. Jermyn, who still lingered at the castle, and Mr. Alfred Mountchesney and Lord Milford, who were mere passing guests, on their way to Scotland, but reconnoitering the heiresses in their course.

Lord de Mowbray was profuse of praise and com-

pliments. His lordship was apt to be too civil. The breed would come out sometimes. To-day he was quite the coffee-house waiter. He praised everything: the machinery, the workmen, the cotton manufactured and the cotton raw, even the smoke. But Mrs. Trafford would not have the smoke defended, and his lordship gave up the smoke, but only to please her. As for Lady de Mowbray, she was as usual courteous and condescending, with a kind of smouldering smile on her fair aquiline face, that seemed half pleasure and half surprise at the strange people she was among. Lady Joan was haughty and scientific, approved of much, but principally of the system of ventilation, of which she asked several questions which greatly perplexed Mrs. Trafford, who slightly blushed, and looked at her husband for relief, but he was engaged with Lady Maud, who was full of enthusiasm, entered into everything with the zest of sympathy, identified herself with the factory system almost as much as she had done with the Crusades, and longed to teach in singing schools, found public gardens, and bid fountains flow and sparkle for the people.

'I think the works were wonderful,' said Lord Milford, as he was cutting a pasty; 'and indeed, Mrs. Trafford, everything here is charming; but what I have most admired at your place, is a young girl we met; the most beautiful I think I ever saw.'

'With the most beautiful dog,' said Mr. Mountchesney.

'Oh! that must have been Sybil!' exclaimed Mrs. Trafford.

'And who is Sybil?' asked Lady Maud. 'That is one of our family names. We all thought her quite beautiful.'

'She is a child of the house,' said Mrs. Trafford, 'or rather was, for I am sorry to say she has long quitted us.'

'Is she a nun?' asked Lord Milford, 'for her vestments had a conventual air.'

'She has just left your convent at Mowbray,' said Mr. Trafford, addressing his answer to Lady Maud, 'and rather against her will. She clings to the dress she was accustomed to there.'

'And now she resides with you?'

'No; I should be happy if she did. I might almost say she was brought up under this roof. She lives now with her father.'

'And who is so fortunate as to be her father?' inquired Mr. Mountchesney.

'Her father is the inspector of my works; the person who accompanied us over them this morning.'

'What! that handsome man I so much admired,' said Lady Maud, 'so very aristocratic-looking. Papa,' she said, addressing herself to Lord de Mowbray, 'the inspector of Mr. Trafford's works we are speaking of, that aristocratic-looking person that I observed to you, he is the father of the beautiful girl.'

'He seemed a very intelligent person,' said Lord de Mowbray, with many smiles.

'Yes,' said Mr. Trafford; 'he has great talents and great integrity. I would trust him with anything and to any amount. All I wish,' he added, with a smile and in a lower tone to Lady de Mowbray, 'all I wish is, that he was not quite so fond of politics.'

'Is he very violent?' inquired her ladyship, in a sugary tone.

'Too violent,' said Mr. Trafford; 'and wild in his ideas.'

'And yet I suppose,' said Lord Milford, 'he must be very well off.'

'Why, I must say for him it is not selfishness that makes him a malcontent,' said Mr. Trafford; 'he bemoans the condition of the people.'

'If we are to judge of the condition of the people by what we see here,' said Lord de Mowbray, 'there is little to lament in it. But I fear these are instances not so common as we could wish. You must have been at a great outlay, Mr. Trafford?'

'Why,' said Mr. Trafford, 'for my part I have always considered that there was nothing so expensive as a vicious population. I hope I had other objects in view in what I have done than a pecuniary compensation. They say we all have our hobbies; and it was ever mine to improve the condition of my workpeople, to see what good tenements, and good schools, and just wages paid in a fair manner, and the encouragement of civilising pursuits would do to elevate their character. I should find an ample reward in the moral tone and material happiness of this community; but, really, viewing it in a pecuniary point of view, the investment of capital has been one of the most profitable I ever made; and I would not, I assure you, for double its amount, exchange my workpeople for the promiscuous assemblage engaged in other factories.'

'The influence of the atmosphere on the condition of the labourer is a subject which deserves investigation,' said Lady Joan to Mr. Jermyn, who stared and bowed.

'And you do not feel alarmed at having a person of such violent opinions as your inspector at the head of your establishment?' said Lady Firebrace to Mr. Trafford, who smiled a negative.

'What is the name of the intelligent individual who accompanied us?' inquired Lord de Mowbray.

'His name is Gerard,' said Mr. Trafford.

'I believe a common name in these parts,' said Lord de Mowbray, looking a little confused.

'Not very,' said Mr. Trafford; ''tis an old name, and the stock has spread; but all Gerards claim a common lineage, I believe, and my inspector has gentle blood, they say, in his veins.'

'He looks as if he had,' said Lady Maud.

'All persons with good names affect good blood,' said Lord de Mowbray; and then turning to Mrs. Trafford he overwhelmed her with elaborate courtesies of praise; praised everything again: first generally and then in detail; the factory, which he seemed to prefer to his castle; the house, which he seemed to prefer even to the factory; the gardens, from which he anticipated even greater gratification than from the house. And this led to an expression of a hope that he would visit them. And so in due time the luncheon was achieved. Mrs. Trafford looked at her guests, there was a rustling and a stir, and everybody was to go and see the gardens that Lord de Mowbray had so much praised.

'I am all for looking after the beautiful nun,' said Mr. Mountchesney to Lord Milford.

'I think I shall ask the respectable manufacturer to introduce me to her,' replied his lordship.

In the meantime Egremont had joined Gerard at the factory.

'You should have come sooner,' said Gerard, 'and then you might have gone round with the fine folks. We have had a grand party here from the castle.'

'So I perceived,' said Egremont, 'and withdrew.'

'Ah! they were not in your way, eh?' he said in a mocking smile. 'Well, they were very condescending; at least for such great people. An earl! Earl de Mowbray; I suppose he came over with William the Conqueror. Mr. Trafford makes a show of the place, and it amuses their visitors, I dare say, like anything else that's strange. There were some young gentlemen with them, who did not seem to know much about anything. I thought I had a right to be amused too; and I must say I liked very much to see one of them looking at the machinery through his eye-glass. There was one very venturesome chap: I thought he was going to catch hold of the fly-wheel, but I gave him a spin which I believe saved his life, though he did rather stare. He was a lord.'

'They are great heiresses, his daughters, they say at Mowbray,' said Egremont.

'I dare say,' said Gerard. 'A year ago this earl had a son, an only son, and then his daughters were not great heiresses. But the son died, and now it's their turn. And perhaps some day it will be somebody else's turn. If you want to understand the ups and downs of life, there's nothing like the parchments of an estate. Now master, now man! He who served in the hall now lords in it; and very often the baseborn change their liveries for coronets, while gentle blood has nothing left but — dreams; eh, Master Franklin?'

'It seems you know the history of this Lord de Mowbray?'

'Why, a man learns a good many things in his time; and living in these parts, there are few secrets of the notables. He has had the title to his broad acres questioned before this time, my friend.'

'Indeed!'

'Yes; I could not help thinking of that to-day,' said Gerard, 'when he questioned me with his mincing voice and pulled the wool with his cursed white hands and showed it to his dame, who touched it with her little finger; and his daughters, who tossed their heads like peahens, Lady Joan and Lady Maud. Lady Joan and Lady Maud!' repeated Gerard in a voice of bitter sarcasm. 'I did not care for the rest; but I could not stand that Lady Joan and that Lady Maud. I wonder if my Sybil saw them.'

In the meantime, Sybil had been sent for by Mrs. Trafford. She had inferred from the message that the guests had departed, and her animated cheek showed the eagerness with which she had responded to the call. Bounding along with a gladness of the heart which lent additional lustre to her transcendent brightness, she suddenly found herself surrounded in the garden by Lady Maud and her friends. The daughter of Lord de Mowbray, who could conceive nothing but humility as the cause of her alarmed look, attempted to reassure her by condescending volubility, turning often to her friends and praising in admiring interrogatories Sybil's beauty.

'And we took advantage of your absence,' said Lady Maud in a tone of amiable artlessness, 'to find out all about you. And what a pity we did not know you when you were at the convent, because then you might have been constantly at the castle; indeed I should have insisted on it. But still I hear we are neighbours; you must promise to pay me a visit, you must indeed. Is not she beautiful?' she added in a lower but still distinct voice to her friend. 'Do you know, I think there is so much beauty among the lower order.'

Mr. Mountchesney and Lord Milford poured forth several insipid compliments, accompanied with some speaking looks which they flattered themselves could not be misconstrued. Sybil said not a word, but answered each flood of phrases with a cold reverence.

Undeterred by her somewhat haughty demeanour, which Lady Maud only attributed to the novelty of her situation, her ignorance of the world, and her embarrassment under this overpowering condescension, the good-tempered and fussy daughter of Lord de Mowbray proceeded to reassure Sybil, and to enforce on her that this perhaps unprecedented descent from superiority was not a mere transient courtliness of the moment, and that she really might rely on her patronage and favourable feeling.

'You really must come and see me,' said Lady Maud, 'I shall never be happy till you have made me a visit. Where do you live? I will come and fetch you myself in the carriage. Now let us fix a day at once. Let me see, this is Saturday. What say you to next Monday?'

'I thank you,' said Sybil, very gravely, 'but I never quit my home.'

'What a darling!' exclaimed Lady Maud looking round at her friends. 'Is not she? I know exactly what you feel. But really you shall not be the least embarrassed. It may feel strange at first, to be sure, but then I shall be there; and do you know I look upon you quite as my *protégée*.'

'*Protégée*,' said Sybil. 'I live with my father.'

'What a dear!' said Lady Maud, looking round to Lord Milford. 'Is not she naïve?'

'And are you the guardian of these beautiful flowers?' said Mr. Mountchesney.

Sybil signified a negative, and added, 'Mrs. Trafford is very proud of them.'

'You must see the flowers at Mowbray Castle,' said Lady Maud. 'They are unprecedented, are they not, Lord Milford? You know you said the other day that they were equal to Mrs. Lawrence's. I am charmed to find you are fond of flowers,' continued Lady Maud; 'you will be so delighted with Mowbray. Ah! mama is calling us. Now fix; shall it be Monday?'

'Indeed,' said Sybil, 'I never leave my home. I am one of the lower order, and live only among the lower order. I am here to-day merely for a few hours to pay an act of homage to a benefactor.'

'Well, I shall come and fetch you,' said Lady Maud, covering her surprise and mortification by a jaunty air that would not confess defeat.

'And so shall I,' said Mr. Mountchesney.

'And so shall I,' whispered Lord Milford, lingering a little behind.

The great and distinguished party had disappeared; their glittering barouche, their prancing horses, their gay grooms, all had vanished; the sound of their wheels was no longer heard. Time flew on; the bell announced that the labour of the week had closed. There was a half holiday always on the last day of the week at Mr. Trafford's settlement; and every man, woman, and child, were paid their wages in the great room before they left the mill. Thus the expensive and evil habits which result from wages being paid in public-houses were prevented. There was also in this system another great advantage for the workpeople. They received their wages early enough to repair to the neighbouring markets and make their

purchases for the morrow. This added greatly to their comfort, and, rendering it unnecessary for them to run in debt to the shopkeepers, added really to their wealth. Mr. Trafford thought that next to the amount of wages, the most important consideration was the method in which wages are paid; and those of our readers who may have read or can recall the sketches, neither coloured nor exaggerated, which we have given in the early part of this volume of the very different manner in which the working classes may receive the remuneration for their toil, will probably agree with the sensible and virtuous master of Walter Gerard.

He, accompanied by his daughter and Egremont, is now on his way home. A soft summer afternoon; the mild beam still gilding the tranquil scene; a river, green meads full of kine, woods vocal with the joyous song of the thrush and the blackbird; and in the distance, the lofty breast of the purple moor, still blazing in the sun: fair sights and renovating sounds after a day of labour passed in walls and amid the ceaseless and monotonous clang of the spindle and the loom. So Gerard felt it, as he stretched his great limbs in the air and inhaled its perfumed volume.

'Ah! I was made for this, Sybil,' he exclaimed; 'but never mind, my child, never mind; tell me more of your fine visitors.'

Egremont found the walk too short; fortunately, from the undulation of the vale, they could not see the cottage until within a hundred yards of it. When they were in sight, a man came forth from the garden to greet them; Sybil gave an exclamation of pleasure; it was Morley.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Stephen Pays a Visit.

ORLEY greeted Gerard and his daughter with great warmth, and then looked at Egremont. 'Our companion in the ruins of Marney Abbey,' said Gerard; 'you and our friend Franklin here should become acquainted, Stephen, for you both follow the same craft. He is a journalist like yourself, and is our neighbour for a time, and yours.'

'What journal are you on, may I ask?' inquired Morley.

Egremont reddened, was confused, and then replied, 'I have no claim to the distinguished title of a journalist. I am but a reporter; and have some special duties here.'

'Hem!' said Morley; and then taking Gerard by the arm, he walked away with him, leaving Egremont and Sybil to follow them.

'Well I have found him, Walter.'

'What, Hatton?'

'No, no; the brother.'

'And what knows he?'

'Little enough; yet something. Our man lives

and prospers; these are facts, but where he is, or what he is — not a clue.'

'And this brother cannot help us?'

'On the contrary, he sought information from me; he is a savage, beneath even our worst ideas of popular degradation. All that is ascertained is that our man exists and is well-to-do in the world. There comes an annual and anonymous contribution, and not a light one, to his brother. I examined the postmarks of the letters, but they all varied, and were evidently arranged to mislead. I fear you will deem I have not done much; yet it was wearisome enough, I can tell you.'

'I doubt it not; and I am sure, Stephen, you have done all that man could. I was fancying that I should hear from you to-day; for what think you has happened? My lord himself, his family and train, have all been in state to visit the works, and I had to show them. Queer that, wasn't it? He offered me money when it was over. How much I know not, I would not look at it. Though to be sure, they were perhaps my own rents, eh? But I pointed to the sick box, and his own dainty hand deposited the sum there.'

''Tis very strange. And you were with him face to face?'

'Face to face. Had you brought me news of the papers, I should have thought that Providence had rather a hand in it; but now, we are still at sea.'

'Still at sea,' said Morley musingly, 'but he lives and prospers. He will turn up yet, Walter.'

'Amen! Since you have taken up this thing, Stephen, it is strange how my mind has hankered after the old business, and yet it ruined my father, and mayhap may do as bad for his son.'

'We will not think that,' said Morley. 'At present we will think of other things. You may guess I am a bit wearied; I think I'll say good night; you have strangers with you.'

'Nay, nay, man; nay. This Franklin is a likely lad enough; I think you will take to him. Prithee come in. Sybil will not take it kindly if you go, after so long an absence; and I am sure I shall not.'

So they entered together.

The evening passed in various conversation, though it led frequently to the staple subject of talk beneath the roof of Gerard—the condition of the people. What Morley had seen in his recent excursion afforded materials for many comments.

'The domestic feeling is fast vanishing among the working classes of this country,' said Gerard; 'nor is it wonderful; the home no longer exists.'

'But there are means of reviving it,' said Egremont; 'we have witnessed them to-day. Give men homes, and they will have soft and homely notions. If all men acted like Mr. Trafford, the condition of the people would be changed.'

'But all men will not act like Mr. Trafford,' said Morley. 'It requires a sacrifice of self which cannot be expected, which is unnatural. It is not individual influence that can renovate society; it is some new principle that must reconstruct it. You lament the expiring idea of home. It would not be expiring if it were worth retaining. The domestic principle has fulfilled its purpose. The irresistible law of progress demands that another should be developed. It will come; you may advance or retard, but you cannot prevent it. It will work out like the development of organic nature. In the present state of civilisation,

and with the scientific means of happiness at our command, the notion of home should be obsolete. Home is a barbarous idea; the method of a rude age; home is isolation; therefore anti-social. What we want is community.'

'It is all very fine,' said Gerard, 'and I dare say you are right, Stephen; but I like stretching my feet on my own hearth.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

Parting.

TIME passes with a measured and memorable wing during the first period of a sojourn in a new place, among new characters and new manners. Every person, every incident, every feeling, touches and stirs the imagination. The restless mind creates and observes at the same time. Indeed, there is scarcely any popular tenet more erroneous than that which holds that when time is slow, life is dull. It is very often, and very much the reverse. If we look back on those passages of our life which dwell most upon the memory, they are brief periods full of action and novel sensation.

Egremont found this to be true during the first days of his new residence in Mowedale. The first week, an epoch in his life, seemed an age; at the end of the first month, he began to deplore the swiftness of time, and almost to moralise over the brevity of existence. He found that he was leading a life of perfect happiness, but of remarkable simplicity; he wished it might never end, but felt difficulty in comprehending how, in the first days of his experience of it, it had seemed so strange; almost

as strange as it was sweet. The day, that commenced early, was passed in reading; books lent him often, too, by Sybil Gerard; sometimes in a ramble with her and Morley, who had time much at his command, to some memorable spot in the neighbourhood, or in the sport which the river and the rod secured Egremont. In the evening, he invariably repaired to the cottage of Gerard, beneath whose humble roof he found every female charm that can fascinate, and conversation that stimulated his intelligence.

Gerard was ever the same; hearty, simple, with a depth of native thought on the subjects on which they touched, and with a certain grandeur of sentiment and conception which contrasted with his social position, but which became his idiosyncrasy. Sybil spoke little, but hung upon the accents of her father; yet ever and anon her rich tones conveyed to the charmed ear of Egremont some deep conviction, the earnestness of her intellect as remarkable as the almost sacred repose of her mien and manner. Of Morley, at first Egremont saw a great deal: he lent our friend books, opened, with unreserve and with great richness of speculative and illustrative power, on the questions which ever engaged him, and which were new and highly interesting to his companion. But, as time advanced, whether it were that the occupations of Morley increased, and the calls on his hours left him fewer occasions for the indulgence of social intercourse, Egremont saw him seldom, except at Gerard's cottage, where generally he might be found in the course of the week, and their rambles together had entirely ceased.

Alone, Egremont mused much over the daughter of Gerard, but, shrinking from the precise and the

definite, his dreams were delightful but vague. All that he asked was, that his present life should go on for ever; he wished for no change, and at length almost persuaded himself that no change could arrive; as men who are basking in a summer sun, surrounded by bright and beautiful objects, cannot comprehend how the seasons can ever alter; that the sparkling foliage should shrivel and fall away, the foaming waters become icebound, and the blue serene a dark and howling space.

In this train of mind, the early days of October having already stolen on him, an incident occurred which startled him in his retirement, and rendered it necessary that he should instantly quit it. Egremont had entrusted the secret of his residence to a faithful servant who communicated with him, when necessary, under his assumed name. Through these means he received a letter from his mother, written from London, where she had unexpectedly arrived, entreating him, in urgent terms, to repair to her without a moment's delay, on a matter of equal interest and importance to herself and him. Such an appeal from such a quarter, from the parent that had ever been kind, and the friend that had ever been faithful, was not for a moment to be neglected. Already a period had elapsed since its transmission, which Egremont regretted. He resolved at once to quit Mowedale, nor could he console himself with the prospect of an immediate return. Parliament was to assemble in the ensuing month, and, independently of the unknown cause which summoned him immediately to town, he was well aware that much disagreeable business awaited him which could no longer be postponed. He had determined not to take his seat unless

the expenses of his contest were previously discharged, and, despairing of his brother's aid, and shrinking from trespassing any further on his mother's resources, the future looked gloomy enough: indeed, nothing but the frequent presence and the constant influence of Sybil had driven from his mind the ignoble melancholy which, relieved by no pensive fancy, is the invariable attendant of pecuniary embarrassment.

And now he was to leave her. The event, rather the catastrophe, which, under any circumstances, could not be long postponed, was to be precipitated. He strolled up to the cottage to bid her farewell, and to leave kind words for her father. Sybil was not there. The old dame who kept their home informed him that Sybil was at the convent, but would return in the evening. It was impossible to quit Mowedale without seeing Sybil; equally impossible to postpone his departure. But by travelling through the night, the lost hours might be regained. So Egremont made his arrangements, and awaited with anxiety and impatience the last evening.

The evening, like his heart, was not serene. The soft air that had lingered so long with them, a summer visitant in an autumnal sky, and loth to part, was no more present. A cold harsh wind, gradually rising, chilled the system, and grated on the nerves. There was misery in its blast, and depression in its moan. Egremont felt infinitely dispirited. The landscape around him, that he had so often looked upon with love and joy, was dull and hard; the trees dingy, the leaden waters motionless, the distant hills rough and austere. Where was that translucent sky, once brilliant as his enamoured fancy; those bowery

groves of aromatic fervour wherein he had loved to roam and muse; that river of swift and sparkling light that flowed and flashed like the current of his enchanted hours? All vanished, as his dreams.

He stood before the cottage of Gerard; he recalled the eve that he had first gazed upon its moonlit garden. What wild and delicious thoughts were then his! They were gone like the illumined hour. Nature and fortune had alike changed. Prescient of sorrow, almost prophetic of evil, he opened the cottage door, and the first person his eye encountered was Morley.

Egremont had not met him for some time, and his cordial greeting of Egremont to-night contrasted with the coldness, not to say estrangement, which to the regret and sometimes the perplexity of Egremont had gradually grown up between them. Yet on no occasion was his presence less desired by our friend. Morley was talking, as Egremont entered, with great animation; in his hand a newspaper, on a paragraph contained in which he was commenting. The name of Marney caught the ear of Egremont, who turned rather pale at the sound, and hesitated on the threshold. The unembarrassed welcome of his friends, however, reassured him, and in a moment he even ventured to inquire the subject of their conversation. Morley, immediately referring to the newspaper, said, 'This is what I have just read:

'"EXTRAORDINARY SPORT AT THE EARL OF MARNEY'S. On Wednesday, in a small cover called the Horns, near Marney Abbey, his Grace the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, the Earl of Marney, Colonel Rippe, and Captain Grouse, with only four hours' shooting, bagged the extraordinary number of seven hundred

and thirty head of game, namely, hares three hundred and thirty-nine; pheasants two hundred and twenty-one; partridges thirty-four; rabbits eighty-seven; and the following day upwards of fifty hares, pheasants, &c. (wounded the previous day), were picked up. Out of the four hours' shooting, two of the party were absent an hour and a half, namely, the Earl of Marney and Captain Grouse, attending an agricultural meeting in the neighbourhood; the noble earl, with his usual considerate condescension, having kindly consented personally to distribute the various prizes to the labourers whose good conduct entitled them to the distinction."

'What do you think of that, Franklin?' said Morley. 'That is our worthy friend of Marney Abbey, where we first met. You do not know this part of the country, or you would smile at the considerate condescension of the worst landlord in England; and who was, it seems, thus employed the day or so after his battue, as they call it.' And Morley turning the paper read another paragraph:

'"At a Petty Sessions holden at the Green Dragon Inn, Marney, Friday, October —, 1837.

'"Magistrates present: The Earl of Marney, the Rev. Felix Flimsey, and Captain Grouse.

'"Information against Thomas Hind for a trespass in pursuit of game in Blackrock Wood, the property of Sir Vavasour Firebrace, Bart. The case was distinctly proved, several wires being found in the pocket of the defendant. Defendant was fined in the full penalty of forty shillings and costs twenty-seven; the Bench being of opinion there was no excuse for

him, Hind being in regular employ as a farm-labourer and gaining his seven shillings a week. Defendant, being unable to pay the penalty, was sent for two months to Marham gaol."'

'What a pity,' said Morley, 'that Robert Hind, instead of meditating the snaring of a hare, had not been fortunate enough to pick up a maimed one crawling about the fields the day after the battue. It would certainly have been better for himself; and, if he has a wife and family, better for the parish.'

'Oh!' said Gerard, 'I doubt not they were all picked up by the poulterer who has the contract: even the Normans did not sell their game.'

'The question is,' said Morley, 'would you rather be barbarous or mean; that is the alternative presented by the real and the pseudo Norman nobility of England. Where I have been lately, there is a Bishopsgate Street merchant who has been made for no conceivable public reason a baron bold. Bigod and Bohun could not enforce the forest laws with such severity as this dealer in cotton and indigo.'

'It is a difficult question to deal with, this affair of the game laws,' said Egremont; 'how will you reach the evil? Would you do away with the offence of trespass? And if so, what is your protection for property?'

'It comes to a simple point though,' said Morley, 'the territorialists must at length understand that they cannot at the same time have the profits of a farm and the pleasures of a chase.'

At this moment entered Sybil. At the sight of her, the remembrance that they were about to part nearly overwhelmed Egremont. Her supremacy over

his spirit was revealed to him, and nothing but the presence of other persons could have prevented him from avowing his entire subjection. His hand trembled as he touched hers, and his eye, searching yet agitated, would have penetrated her serene soul. Gerard and Morley, somewhat withdrawn, pursued their conversation; while Egremont, hanging over Sybil, attempted to summon courage to express to her his sad adieu. It was in vain. Alone, perhaps he might have poured forth a passionate farewell. But constrained he became embarrassed; and his conduct was at the same time tender and perplexing. He asked and repeated questions which had already been answered. His thoughts wandered from their conversation, but not from her with whom he should have conversed. Once their eyes met, and Sybil observed his suffused with tears. Once he looked round and caught the glance of Morley, instantly withdrawn, but not easy to be forgotten.

Shortly after this and earlier than his wont, Morley rose and wished them good night. He shook hands with Egremont and bade him farewell with some abruptness. Harold, who seemed half asleep, suddenly sprang from the side of his mistress and gave an agitated bark. Harold was never very friendly to Morley, who now tried to soothe him, but in vain. The dog looked fiercely at him and barked again, but, the moment Morley had disappeared, Harold resumed his usual air of proud, high-bred gentleness, and thrust his nose into the hand of Egremont, who patted him with fondness.

The departure of Morley was a great relief to Egremont, though the task that was left was still a painful effort. He rose and walked for a moment up

and down the room, and commenced an unfinished sentence, approached the hearth, and leant over the mantel; and then at length extending his hand to Gerard, he exclaimed, in a trembling voice, 'Best of friends, I must leave Mowedale.'

'I am very sorry,' said Gerard; 'and when?'

'Now,' said Egremont.

'Now!' said Sybil.

'Yes; this instant. My summons is urgent. I ought to have left this morning. I came here then to bid you farewell,' he said, looking at Sybil, 'to express to you how deeply I was indebted to you for all your goodness; how dearly I shall cherish the memory of these happy days, the happiest I have ever known;' and his voice faltered. 'I came also to leave a kind message for you, my friend, a hope that we might meet again and soon, but your daughter was absent, and I could not leave Mowedale without seeing either of you. So I must contrive to get on through the night.'

'Well, we lose a pleasant neighbour,' said Gerard; 'we shall miss you, I doubt not, eh, Sybil?'

But Sybil had turned away her head; she was leaning over and seemed to be caressing Harold, and was silent.

How much Egremont would have liked to have offered or invited correspondence; to have proffered his services, when the occasion permitted; to have said or proposed many things that might have cherished their acquaintance or friendship; but, embarrassed by his incognito and all its consequent deception, he could do nothing but tenderly express his regret at parting, and speak vaguely and almost mysteriously of their soon meeting again. He held out

again his hand to Gerard, who shook it heartily: then approaching Sybil, Egremont said, 'You have shown me a thousand kindnesses, which I cherish,' he added in a lower tone, 'above all human circumstances. Would you deign to let this volume lie upon your table?' and he offered Sybil an English translation of Thomas à Kempis, illustrated by some masterpieces. In its first page was written 'Sybil, from a faithful friend.'

'I accept it,' said Sybil, with a trembling voice and rather pale, 'in remembrance of a friend.' She held forth her hand to Egremont, who retained it for an instant, and then bending very low, pressed it to his lips. As with an agitated heart he hastily crossed the threshold of the cottage, something seemed to hold him back. He turned round. The bloodhound had seized him by the coat, and looked up to him with an expression of affectionate remonstrance against his departure. Egremont bent down, caressed Harold, and released himself from his grasp.

When Egremont left the cottage, he found the country enveloped in a thick white mist, so that had it not been for some huge black shadows which he recognised as the crests of trees, it would have been very difficult to discriminate the earth from the sky, and the mist thickening as he advanced, even these fallacious landmarks threatened to disappear. He had to walk to Mowbray to catch a night train for London. Every moment was valuable, but the unexpected and increasing obscurity rendered his progress slow and even perilous. The contiguity to the river made every step important. He had, according to his calculations, proceeded nearly as far as his old residence, and notwithstanding the careless courage of

youth and the annoyance of relinquishing a project, intolerable at that season of life, was meditating the expediency of renouncing that night the attempt on Mowbray and of gaining his former quarters for shelter. He stopped, as he had stopped several times before, to calculate rather than to observe. The mist was so thick that he could not see his own extended hand. It was not the first time that it had occurred to him that some one or some thing was hovering about his course.

'Who is there?' exclaimed Egremont. But no one answered.

He moved on a little, but very slowly. He felt assured that his ear caught a contiguous step. He repeated his interrogatory in a louder tone, but it obtained no response. Again he stopped. Suddenly he was seized; an iron grasp assailed his throat, a hand of steel griped his arm. The unexpected onset hurried him on. The sound of waters assured him that he was approaching the precipitous bank of that part of the river which, from a ledge of pointed rocks, here formed rapids. Vigorous and desperate, Egremont plunged like some strong animal on whom a beast of prey had made a fatal spring. His feet clung to the earth as if they were held by some magnetic power. With his disengaged arm he grappled with his mysterious and unseen foe.

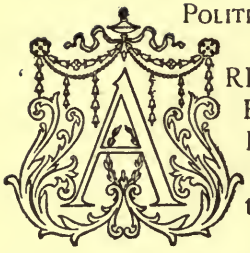
At this moment he heard the deep bay of a hound.

'Harold!' he exclaimed. The dog, invisible, sprang forward and seized upon his assailant. So violent was the impulse that Egremont staggered and fell, but he fell freed from his dark enemy. Stunned and exhausted, some moments elapsed before he was entirely himself. The wind had suddenly changed; a

violent gust had partially dispelled the mist; the outline of the landscape was in many places visible. Beneath him were the rapids of the Mowe, over which a watery moon threw a faint, flickering light. Egremont was lying on its precipitous bank; and Harold, panting, was leaning over him and looking in his face, and sometimes licking him with that tongue which, though not gifted with speech, had spoken so seasonably in the moment of danger.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Politicians in Petticoats.



'RE you going down to the House, Egerton?' inquired Mr. Berners at Brooks's, of a brother M.P., about four o'clock in the early part of the spring of 1839.

'The moment I have sealed this letter; we will walk down together, if you like;' and in a few minutes they left the club.

'Our fellows are in a sort of fright about this Jamaica bill,' said Mr. Egerton, in an undertone, as if he were afraid a passer-by might hear him. 'Don't say anything about it, but there's a screw loose.'

'The deuce! But how do you mean?'

'They say the Rads are going to throw us over.'

'Talk, talk. They have threatened this half-a-dozen times. Smoke, sir; it will end in smoke.'

'I hope it may; but I know, in great confidence, mind you, that Lord John was saying something about it yesterday.'

'That may be; I believe our fellows are heartily sick of the business, and perhaps would be glad of an excuse to break up the government: but we must not have Peel in; nothing could prevent dissolution.'

'Their fellows go about and say that Peel would not dissolve if he came in.'

'Trust him!'

'He has had enough of dissolutions, they say.

'Why, after all, they have not done him much harm. Even '34 was a hit.'

'Whoever dissolves,' said Mr. Egerton, 'I do not think there will be much of a majority either way in our time.'

'We have seen strange things,' said Mr. Berners.

'They never would think of breaking up the government without making their peers,' said Mr. Egerton.

'The Queen is not over partial to making more peers; and when parties are in the present state of equality, the Sovereign is no longer a mere pageant.'

'They say her Majesty is more touched about these affairs of the Chartists than anything else,' said Mr. Egerton.

'They are rather queer; but for my part I have no serious fears of a Jacquerie.'

'Not if it comes to an outbreak; but a passive resistance Jacquerie is altogether a different thing. When we see a regular convention assembled in London and holding its daily meetings in Palace Yard, and a general inclination evinced throughout the country to refrain from the consumption of excisable articles, I cannot help thinking that affairs are more serious than you imagine. I know the government are all on the *qui vive*.'

'Just the fellows we wanted!' exclaimed Lord Fitz-Heron, who was leaning on the arm of Lord Milford, and who met Mr. Egerton and his friend in Pall Mall.

'We want a brace of pairs,' said Lord Milford. 'Will you two fellows pair?'

'I must go down,' said Mr. Egerton; 'but I will pair from half-past seven to eleven.'

'I just paired with Ormsby at White's,' said Berners, 'not half an hour ago. We are both going to dine at Eskdale's, and so it was arranged. Have you any news to-day?'

'Nothing; except they say that Alfred Mountchesney is going to marry Lady Joan Fitz-Warene,' said Lord Milford.'

'She has been given to so many,' said Mr. Egerton.

'It is always so with these great heiresses,' said his companion. 'They never marry. They cannot bear the thought of sharing their money. I bet Lady Joan will turn out another specimen of the Tabitha Crœsus.'

'Well, put down our pair, Egerton,' said Lord Fitz-Heron. 'You do not dine at Sidonia's by any chance?'

'Would that I did! You will have the best dishes and the best guests. I feed at old Malton's: perhaps a *tête-à-tête*: Scotch broth and to tell him the news!'

'There is nothing like being a dutiful nephew, particularly when one's uncle is a bachelor and has twenty thousand a year,' said Lord Milford. '*Au revoir!* I suppose there will be no division to-night.'

'No chance.'

Egerton and Berners walked on a little further. As they came to the Golden Ball, a lady quitting the shop was just about to get into her carriage; she stopped as she recognised them. It was Lady Firebrace.

'Ah! Mr. Berners, how d'ye do? You were just the person I wanted to see! How is Lady Augusta, Mr. Egerton? You have no idea, Mr. Berners, how I have been fighting your battles!'

'Really, Lady Firebrace,' said Mr. Berners, rather uneasy, for he had perhaps, like most of us, a peculiar dislike to being attacked or cheapened. 'You are too good.'

'Oh! I don't care what a person's politics are!' exclaimed Lady Firebrace, with an air of affectionate devotion. 'I should be very glad indeed to see you one of us. You know your father was! But if any one is my friend, I never will hear him attacked behind his back without fighting his battles: and I certainly did fight yours last night.'

'Pray tell me where it was?'

'Lady Crumbleford—'

'Confound Lady Crumbleford!' said Mr. Berners, indignant, but a little relieved.

'No, no; Lady Crumbleford told Lady Alicia Severn.'

'Yes, yes,' said Berners, a little pale, for he was touched.

'But I cannot stop,' said Lady Firebrace. 'I must be with Lady St. Julians exactly at a quarter past four;' and she sprang into her carriage.

'I would sooner meet any woman in London than Lady Firebrace,' said Mr. Berners; 'she makes me uneasy for the day; she contrives to convince me that the whole world are employed behind my back in abusing or ridiculing me.'

'It is her way,' said Egerton; 'she proves her zeal by showing you that you are odious. It is very successful with people of weak nerves. Scared at

their general unpopularity, they seek refuge with the very person who at the same time assures them of their odium and alone believes it unjust. She rules that poor old goose, Lady Gramshawe, who feels that Lady Firebrace makes her life miserable, but is convinced that if she break with the torturer, she loses her only friend.'

'There goes a man who is as much altered as any fellow of our time.'

'Not in his looks; I was thinking the other night that he was better-looking than ever.'

'Oh! no; not in his looks, but in his life. I was at Christchurch with him, and we entered the world about the same time. I was rather before him. He did everything, and did it well. And now one never sees him, except at the House. He goes nowhere; and they tell me he is a regular reading man.'

'Do you think he looks to office?'

'He does not put himself forward.'

'He attends; and his brother will always be able to get anything for him,' said Egerton.

'Oh! he and Marney never speak; they hate each other.'

'By Jove! however, there is his mother; with this marriage of hers and Deloraine House, she will be their grandest dame.'

'She is the only good woman the Tories have: I think their others do them harm, from Lady St. Julians down to your friend Lady Firebrace. I wish Lady Deloraine were with us. She keeps their men together wonderfully; makes her house agreeable; and then her manner, it certainly is perfect; natural, and yet refined.'

'Lady Mina Blake has an idea that, far from looking to office, Egremont's heart is faintly with his party; and that if it were not for the Marchioness—'

'We might gain him, eh?'

'Hem; I hardly know that: he has got crotchets about the people, I am told.'

'What, the ballot and household suffrage?'

''Gad! I believe it is quite a different sort of a thing. I do not know what it is exactly; but I understand he is crotchety.'

'Well, that will not do for Peel. He does not like crotchety men. Do you see that, Egerton?'

At this moment, Mr. Egerton and his friend were about to step over from Trafalgar-square to Charing Cross. They observed the carriages of Lady St. Julians and the Marchioness of Deloraine drawn up side by side in the middle of the street, and those two eminent stateswomen in earnest conversation. Egerton and Berners bowed and smiled, but could not hear the brief but not uninteresting words that have nevertheless reached us.

'I give them eleven,' said Lady St. Julians.

'Well, Charles tells me,' said Lady Deloraine, 'that Sir Thomas says so, and he certainly is generally right; but it is not Charles's own opinion.'

'Sir Thomas, I know, gives them eleven,' said Lady St. Julians; 'and that would satisfy me; and we will say eleven. But I have a list here,' and she slightly elevated her brow, and then glanced at Lady Deloraine with a piquant air, 'which proves that they cannot have more than nine; but this is in the greatest confidence: of course between us there can be no secrets. It is Mr. Tadpole's list; nobody has seen it but myself; not even Sir Robert. Lord Grubminster

has had a stroke; they are concealing it, but Mr. Tadpole has found it out. They wanted to pair him off with Colonel Fantomme, who they think is dying; but Mr. Tadpole has got a mesmerist who has done wonders for him, and who has guaranteed that he shall vote. Well, that makes a difference of one.'

'And then Sir Henry Churton—'

'Oh! you know it,' said Lady St. Julians, looking slightly mortified. 'Yes; he votes with us.'

Lady Deloraine shook her head. 'I think,' she said, 'I know the origin of that report. Quite a mistake. He is in a bad humour, has been so the whole session, and he was at Lady Alice Fermyne's and did say all sorts of things. All that is true. But he told Charles this morning, on a committee, that he should vote with the Government.'

'Stupid man!' exclaimed Lady St. Julians; 'I never could bear him. And I have sent his vulgar wife and great staring daughter a card for next Wednesday! Well, I hope affairs will soon be brought to a crisis, for I do not think I can bear much longer this life of perpetual sacrifice,' added Lady St. Julians, a little out of temper, both because she had lost a vote and found her friend and rival better informed than herself.

'There is no chance of a division to-night,' said Lady Deloraine.

'That is settled,' said Lady St. Julians. 'Adieu, my dear friend. We meet, I believe, at dinner?'

'Plotting,' said Mr. Egerton to Mr. Berners, as they passed the great ladies.

'The only consolation one has,' said Berners, 'is, that if they do turn us out, Lady Deloraine and Lady St. Julians must quarrel, for they both want the same thing.'

'Lady Deloraine will have it,' said Egerton.

Here they picked up Mr. Jermyn, a young Tory M. P., whom perhaps the reader may remember at Mowbray Castle; and they walked on together, Egerton and Berners trying to pump him as to the expectations of his friends.

'How will Trodgits go?' said Egerton.

'I think Trodgits will stay away,' said Jermyn.

'Whom do you give that new man to, that north-country borough fellow; what's his name?' said Berners.

'Blugsby! oh, Blugsby dined with Peel,' said Jermyn.

'Our fellows say dinners are no good,' said Egerton; 'and they certainly are a cursed bore: but you may depend upon it they do for the burgesses. We don't dine our men half enough. Now Blugsby was just the sort of fellow to be caught by dining with Peel; and I dare say they made Peel remember to take wine with him. We got Melbourne to give a grand feed the other day to some of our men who want attention, they say, and he did not take wine with a single guest. He forgot. I wonder what they are doing at the House! Here is Spencer May, he will tell us. Well, what is going on?'

'Wishy is down, and Washy up.'

'No division, of course?'

'Not a chance; a regular covey ready on both sides.'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A Birthday Gift.

N THE morning of the same day that Mr. Egerton and his friend Mr. Berners walked down together to the House of Commons, as appears in our last chapter, Egremont had made a visit to his mother, who had married, since the commencement of this history, the Marquis of Deloraine, a great noble who had always been her admirer. The family had been established by a lawyer, and recently in our history. The present Lord Deloraine, though he was gartered and had been a viceroy, was only the grandson of an attorney, but one who, conscious of his powers, had been called to the bar and died an ex-chancellor. A certain talent was hereditary in the family. The attorney's son had been a successful courtier, and had planted himself in the cabinet for a quarter of a century. It was a maxim in this family to make great alliances; so the blood progressively refined, and the connections were always distinguished by power and fashion. It was a great hit, in the second generation of an earldom, to convert the coronet into that of a marquis; but the son of the old chancellor lived in

stirring times, and cruised for his object with the same devoted patience with which Lord Anson watched for the galleon. It came at last, as everything does if men are firm and calm. The present marquis, through his ancestry and his first wife, was allied with the highest houses of the realm, and looked their peer. He might have been selected as the personification of aristocracy: so noble was his appearance, so distinguished his manner; his bow gained every eye, his smile every heart. He was also very accomplished, and not ill-informed; had read a little, and thought a little, and was in every respect a superior man; alike famed for his favour by the fair, and the constancy of his homage to the charming Lady Marney.

Lord Deloraine was not rich; but he was not embarrassed, and had the appearance of princely wealth; a splendid family mansion with a courtyard; a noble country seat with a magnificent park, including a quite celebrated lake, but with few farms attached to it. He, however, held a good patent place which had been conferred on his descendants by the old chancellor, and this brought in annually some thousands. His marriage with Lady Marney was quite an affair of the heart; her considerable jointure, however, did not diminish the lustre of his position.

It was this impending marriage, and the anxiety of Lady Marney to see Egremont's affairs settled before it took place, which about a year and a half ago had induced her to summon him so urgently from Mowedale, which the reader perhaps may not have forgotten. And now Egremont is paying one of his almost daily visits to his mother at Deloraine House.

'A truce to politics, my dear Charles,' said Lady Marney; 'you must be wearied with my inquiries.

Besides, I do not take the sanguine view of affairs in which some of our friends indulge. I am one of those who think the pear is not ripe. These men will totter on, and longer perhaps than even themselves imagine. I want to speak of something very different. To-morrow, my dear son, is your birthday. Now I should grieve were it to pass without your receiving something which showed that its recollection was cherished by your mother. But of all silly things in the world, the silliest is a present that is not wanted. It destroys the sentiment a little, perhaps, but it enhances the gift, if I ask you in the most literal manner to assist me in giving you something that really would please you?'

'But how can I, my dear mother?' said Egremont. 'You have ever been so kind and so generous that I literally want nothing.'

'Oh! you cannot be such a fortunate man as to want nothing, Charles,' said Lady Marney with a smile. 'A dressing-case you have; your rooms are furnished enough: all this is in my way; but there are such things as horses and guns, of which I know nothing, but which men always require. You must want a horse or a gun, Charles. Well, I should like you to get either; the finest, the most valuable that money can purchase. Or a brougham, Charles; what do you think of a new brougham? Would you like that Barker should build you a brougham?'

'You are too good, my dear mother. I have horses and guns enough; and my present carriage is all I can desire.'

'You will not assist me, then? You are resolved that I shall do something very stupid. For to give you something I am determined.'

'Well, my dear mother,' said Egremont smiling, and looking round, 'give me something that is here.'

'Choose then,' said Lady Marney; and she looked round the satin walls of her apartment, covered with cabinet pictures of exquisite art, and then at her tables crowded with precious and fantastic toys.

'It would be plunder, my dear mother,' said Egremont.

'No, no; you have said it; you shall choose something. Will you have those vases?' and she pointed to an almost matchless specimen of old Sèvres porcelain.

'They are in too becoming a position to be disturbed,' said Egremont, 'and would ill suit my quiet chambers, where a bronze or a marble is my greatest ornament. If you would permit me, I would rather choose a picture.'

'Then select one at once,' said Lady Marney; 'I make no reservation, except that Watteau, for it was given to me by your father before we were married. Shall it be this Cuyp?'

'I would rather choose this,' said Egremont; and he pointed to the portrait of a saint by Allori: the face of a beautiful young girl, radiant and yet solemn, with rich tresses of golden brown hair, and large eyes dark as night, fringed with ebon lashes that hung upon the glowing cheek.

'Ah! you choose that! Well, that was a great favourite of poor Sir Thomas Lawrence. But for my part I have never seen any one in the least like it, and I think I am sure that you have not.'

'It reminds me,' said Egremont musingly.

'Of what you have dreamed,' said Lady Marney,

'Perhaps so,' said Egremont; 'indeed I think it must have been a dream.'

'Well, the vision shall still hover before you,' said his mother; 'and you shall find this portrait to-morrow over your chimney in the Albany.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

Social Influences.

'STRANGERS must withdraw.'

'Division: clear the gallery. Withdraw.'

'Nonsense; no; it's quite ridiculous; quite absurd. Some fellow must get up. Send to the Carlton; send to the Reform; send to Brooks's. Are your men ready? No; are yours? I am sure I can't say. What does it mean? Most absurd! Are there many fellows in the library? The smoking-room is quite full. All our men are paired till half-past eleven. It wants five minutes to the half-hour. What do you think of Trenchard's speech? I don't care for ourselves; I am sorry for him. Well, that is very charitable. Withdraw, withdraw; you must withdraw.'

'Where are you going, Fitz-Heron?' said a Conservative whipling.

'I must go; I am paired till half-past eleven, and it wants some minutes, and my man is not here.'

'Confound it!'

'How will it go?'

''Gad! I don't know.'

'Fishy, eh?'

'Deuced!' said the under-whip in an undertone, pale, and speaking behind his teeth.

The division bell was still ringing; peers and diplomatists and strangers were turned out; members came rushing in from the library and smoking-room; some desperate cabs arrived just in time to land their passengers in the waiting-room. The doors were locked.

The mysteries of the lobby are only for the initiated. Three quarters of an hour after the division was called, the result was known to the exoteric world. Majority for Ministers thirty-seven! Never had the opposition made such a bad division, and this too on their trial of strength for the session. Everything went wrong. Lord Milford was away without a pair. Mr. Ormsby, who had paired with Mr. Berners, never came, and let his man poll; for which he was infinitely accursed, particularly by the expectant twelve hundred a yearers, but, not wanting anything himself, and having an income of forty thousand pounds paid quarterly, Mr. Ormsby bore their reported indignation like a lamb.

There were several other similar or analogous mischances; the Whigs contrived to poll Lord Grubminster in a wheeled chair; he was unconscious, but had heard as much of the debate as a good many. Colonel Fantomme, on the other hand, could not come to time; the mesmerist had thrown him into a trance from which it was fated he never should awake: but the crash of the night was a speech made against the opposition by one of their own men, Mr. Trenchard, who voted with the Government.

'The rest may be accounted for,' said Lady St. Julians to Lady Deloraine the morning after; 'it is

simply vexatious; it was a surprise and will be a lesson: but this affair of this Mr. Trenchard—and they tell me that William Latimer was absolutely cheering him the whole time—what does it mean? Do you know the man?'

'I have heard Charles speak of him, and I think much in his favour,' said Lady Deloraine; 'if he were here, he would tell us more about it. I wonder he does not come: he never misses looking in after a great division and giving me all the news.'

'Do you know, my dear friend,' said Lady St. Julians, with an air of some solemnity, 'I am half meditating a great move? This is not a time for trifling. It is all very well for these people to boast of their division of last night, but it was a surprise, and as great to them as to us. I know there is dissension in the camp; ever since that finality speech of Lord John, there has been a smouldering sedition. Mr. Tadpole knows all about it; he has *liaisons* with the *frondeurs*. This affair of Trenchard may do us the greatest possible injury. When it comes to a fair fight, the Government have not more than twelve or so. If Mr. Trenchard and three or four others choose to make themselves of importance, you see? The danger is imminent, it must be met with decision.'

'And what do you propose doing?'

'Has he a wife?'

'I really do not know. I wish Charles would come, perhaps he could tell us.'

'I have no doubt he has,' said Lady St. Julians. 'One would have met him, somehow or other, in the course of two years, if he had not been married. Well, married or unmarried, with his wife, or without his wife, I shall send him a card for Wednesday.'

And Lady St. Julians paused, overwhelmed as it were by the commensurate vastness of her idea and her sacrifice.

'Do not you think it would be rather sudden?' said Lady Deloraine.

'What does that signify? He will understand it; he will have gained his object; and all will be right.'

'But are you sure it is his object? We do not know the man.'

'What else can be his object?' said Lady St. Julians. 'People get into Parliament to get on; their aims are indefinite. If they have indulged in hallucinations about place before they enter the House, they are soon freed from such distempered fancies; they find they have no more talent than other people, and if they had, they learn that power, patronage, and pay are reserved for us and our friends. Well, then, like practical men, they look to some result, and they get it. They are asked out to dinner more than they would be; they move rigmarole resolutions at nonsensical public meetings; and they get invited with their women to assemblies at their leader's, where they see stars and blue ribbons, and above all, us, who, they little think, in appearing on such occasions, make the greatest conceivable sacrifice. Well, then, of course such people are entirely in one's power, if one only had time and inclination to notice them. You can do anything with them. Ask them to a ball, and they will give you their votes; invite them to dinner, and, if necessary, they will rescind them; but cultivate them, remember their wives at assemblies, and call their daughters, if possible, by their right names; and they will not only change their principles or desert their party for you, but subscribe their fortunes,

if necessary, and lay down their lives in your service.'

'You paint them to the life, my dear Lady St. Julians,' said Lady Deloraine laughing; 'but, with such knowledge and such powers, why did you not save our boroughs?'

'We had lost our heads then, I must confess,' said Lady St. Julians. 'What with the dear King and the dear Duke, we really had brought ourselves to believe that we lived in the days of Versailles or nearly; and I must admit I think we had become a little too exclusive. Out of the cottage circle, there was really no world, and after all we were lost, not by insulting the people, but by snubbing the aristocracy.'

The servant announced Lady Firebrace. 'Oh! my dear Lady Deloraine. O! my dear Lady St. Julians!' and she shook her head.

'You have no news, I suppose,' said Lady St. Julians.

'Only about that dreadful Mr. Trenchard; you know the reason why he ratted?'

'No, indeed,' said Lady St. Julians with a sigh.

'An invitation to Lansdowne House, for himself and his wife!'

'Oh! he is married, then?'

'Yes; she is at the bottom of it all. Terms regularly settled beforehand. I have a note here; all the facts.' And Lady Firebrace twirled in her hand a bulletin from Mr. Tadpole.

'Lansdowne House is destined to cross me,' said Lady St. Julians with bitterness.

'Well, it is provoking,' said Lady Deloraine, 'when you had made up your mind to ask them for Wednesday.'

'Yes, that alone is a sacrifice,' said Lady St. Julians.

'Talking over the division, I suppose,' said Egremont as he entered.

'Ah! Mr. Egremont,' said Lady St. Julians. 'What a *hachis* you made of it!'

Lady Firebrace shook her head, as it were reproachfully.

'Charles,' said Lady Deloraine, 'we were talking of this Mr. Trenchard. Did I not once hear you say you knew something of him?'

'Why, he is one of my intimate acquaintances.'

'Heavens! what a man for a friend!' said Lady St. Julians.

'Heavens!' echoed Lady Firebrace raising her hands.

'And why did you not present him to me, Charles?' said Lady Deloraine.

'I did; at Lady Peel's.'

'And why did you not ask him here?'

'I did several times; but he would not come.'

'He is going to Lansdowne House, though,' said Lady Firebrace.

'I suppose you wrote the leading article in the Standard which I have just read,' said Egremont smiling. 'It announces in large type the secret reasons of Mr. Trenchard's vote.'

'It is a fact,' said Lady Firebrace.

'That Trenchard is going to Lansdowne House to-night; very likely. I have met him at Lansdowne House half-a-dozen times. He is intimate with the family, and lives in the same county.'

'But his wife,' said Lady Firebrace; 'that's the point: he never could get his wife there before.'

'He has none,' said Egremont quietly.

'Then we may regain him,' said Lady St. Julians with energy. 'You shall make a little dinner to Greenwich, Mr. Egremont, and I will sit next to him.'

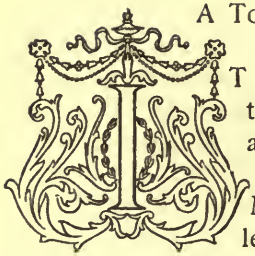
'Fortunate Trenchard!' said Egremont. 'But, do you know, I fear he is hardly worthy of his lot. He has a horror of fine ladies; and there is nothing in the world he more avoids than what you call society. At home, as this morning when I breakfasted with him, or in a circle of his intimates, he is the best company in the world; no one so well informed, fuller of rich humour, and more sincerely amiable. He is popular with all who know him, except Taper, Lady St. Julians, Tadpole, and Lady Firebrace.'

'Well, I think I will ask him still for Wednesday,' said Lady St. Julians; 'and I will write him a little note. If society is not his object, what is?'

'Ay!' said Egremont, 'there is a great question for you and Lady Firebrace to ponder over. This is a lesson for you fine ladies, who think you can govern the world by what you call your social influences: asking people once or twice a year to an inconvenient crowd in your house; now haughtily smirking, and now impertinently staring at them; and flattering yourselves all this time, that to have the occasional privilege of entering your saloons, and the periodical experience of your insolent recognition, is to be a reward for great exertions, or, if necessary, an inducement to infamous tergiversation.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A Torchlight Meeting.



IT WAS night; clear and serene, though the moon had not risen; and a vast concourse of persons were assembling on Mowbray Moor. The chief gathering collected in the vicinity of some huge rocks, one of which, pre-eminent above its fellows, and having a broad flat head, on which some twenty persons might easily stand at the same time, was called the Druid's Altar. The ground about was strewn with stony fragments, covered to-night with human beings, who found a convenient resting-place amid these ruins of some ancient temple, or relics of some ancient world. The shadowy concourse increased, the dim circle of the nocturnal assemblage each moment spread and widened; there was the hum and stir of many thousands. Suddenly in the distance the sound of martial music: and instantly, quick as the lightning, and far more wild, each person present brandished a flaming torch, amid a chorus of cheers, that, renewed and resounding, floated far away over the broad bosom of the dusk wilderness.

The music and the banners denoted the arrival of the leaders of the people. They mounted the craggy

ascent that led to the summit of the Druid's Altar, and there, surrounded by his companions, amid the enthusiastic shouts of the multitude, Walter Gerard came forth to address a torchlight meeting.

His tall form seemed colossal in the uncertain and flickering light, his rich and powerful voice reached almost to the limit of his vast audience, now still with expectation and silent with excitement. Their fixed and eager glance, the mouth compressed with fierce resolution or distended by novel sympathy, as they listened to the exposition of their wrongs, and the vindication of the sacred rights of labour; the shouts and waving of the torches as some bright or bold phrase touched them to the quick; the cause, the hour, the scene, all combined to render the assemblage in a high degree exciting.

'I wonder if Warner will speak to-night,' said Dandy Mick to Devilsdust.

'He can't pitch it in like Gerard,' replied his companion.

'But he is a trump in the tender,' said the Dandy. 'The hand-looms looks to him as their man, and that's a powerful section.'

'If you come to the depth of a question, there's nothing like Stephen Morley,' said Devilsdust. ''Twould take six clergymen any day to settle him. He knows the principles of society by heart. But Gerard gets hold of the passions.'

'And that's the way to do the trick,' said Dandy Mick. 'I wish he would say march, and no mistake.'

'There is a great deal to do before saying that,' said Devilsdust. 'We must have discussion, because when it comes to reasoning, the oligarchs have not

got a leg to stand on; and we must stop the consumption of excisable articles, and when they have no tin to pay the bayonets and their b——y police, they are dished.'

'You have a long head, Dusty,' said Mick.

'Why, I have been thinking of it ever since I knew two and two made four,' said his friend. 'I was not ten years old when I said to myself, it's a pretty go this, that I should be toiling in a shoddy-hole to pay the taxes for a gentleman what drinks his port wine and stretches his legs on a Turkey carpet. Hear, hear,' he suddenly exclaimed, as Gerard threw off a stinging sentence. 'Ah! that's the man for the people. You will see, Mick, whatever happens, Gerard is the man who will always lead.'

Gerard had ceased amid enthusiastic plaudits, and Warner, that hand-loom weaver whom the reader may recollect, and who had since became a popular leader and one of the principal followers of Gerard, had also addressed the multitude. They had cheered and shouted, and voted resolutions, and the business of the night was over. Now they were enjoined to disperse in order and depart in peace. The band sounded a triumphant retreat; the leaders had descended from the Druid's Altar; the multitude were melting away, bearing back to the town their high resolves and panting thoughts, and echoing in many quarters the suggestive appeals of those who had addressed them. Dandy Mick and Devilsdust departed together; the business of their night had not yet commenced, and it was an important one.

They took their way to that suburb whither Gerard and Morley repaired the evening of their return from Marney Abbey; but it was not on this occasion

to pay a visit to Chaffing Jack and his brilliant saloon. Winding through many obscure lanes, Mick and his friend at length turned into a passage which ended in a square court of a not inconsiderable size, and which was surrounded by high buildings that had the appearance of warehouses. Entering one of these, and taking up a dim lamp that was placed on the stone of an empty hearth, Devilsdust led his friend through several unoccupied and unfurnished rooms, until he came to one in which there were some signs of occupation.

'Now, Mick,' said he, in a very earnest, almost solemn tone, 'are you firm?'

'All right, my hearty,' replied his friend, though not without some affectation of ease.

'There is a good deal to go through,' said Devilsdust. 'It tries a man.'

'You don't mean that?'

'But if you are firm, all's right. Now I must leave you.'

'No, no, Dusty,' said Mick.

'I must go,' said Devilsdust; 'and you must rest here till you are sent for. Now mind, whatever is bid you, obey; and whatever you see, be quiet. There,' and Devilsdust taking a flask out of his pocket, held it forth to his friend, 'give a good pull, man; I can't leave it you, for though your heart must be warm, your head must be cool,' and so saying he vanished.

Notwithstanding the animating draught, the heart of Mick Radley trembled. There are some moments when the nervous system defies even brandy. Mick was on the eve of a great and solemn incident, round which for years his imagination had gathered and

brooded. Often in that imagination he had conceived the scene, and successfully confronted its perils or its trials. Often had the occasion been the drama of many a triumphant reverie, but the stern presence of reality had dispelled all his fancy and all his courage. He recalled the warning of Julia, who had often dissuaded him from the impending step; that warning received with so much scorn and treated with so much levity. He began to think that women were always right; that Devilsdust was after all a dangerous counsellor; he even meditated over the possibility of a retreat. He looked around him: the glimmering lamp scarcely indicated the outline of the obscure chamber. It was lofty, nor in the obscurity was it possible for the eye to reach the ceiling, which several huge beams seemed to cross transversely, looming in the darkness. There was apparently no window, and the door by which they had entered was not easily to be recognised. Mick had just taken up the lamp and was surveying his position, when a slight noise startled him, and looking round he beheld at some little distance two forms which he hoped were human.

Enveloped in dark cloaks and wearing black masks, a conical cap of the same colour adding to their considerable height, each held a torch. They stood in silence, two awful sentries.

Their appearance appalled, their stillness terrified Mick: he remained with his mouth open, and the lamp in his extended hand. At length, unable any longer to sustain the solemn mystery, and plucking up his natural audacity, he exclaimed, 'I say, what do you want?'

All was silent.

'Come, come,' said Mick, much alarmed; 'none of this sort of thing. I say, you must speak though.'

The figures advanced; they stuck their torches in a niche that was by; and then they placed each of them a hand on the shoulder of Mick.

'No, no; none of that,' said Mick, trying to disembarrass himself.

But, notwithstanding this fresh appeal, one of the silent masks pinioned his arms; and in a moment the eyes of the helpless friend of Devilsdust were bandaged.

Conducted by these guides, it seemed to Mick that he was traversing interminable rooms, or rather galleries, for, once stretching out his arm, while one of his supporters had momentarily quitted him to open some gate or door, Mick touched a wall. At length one of the masks spoke, and said, 'In five minutes you will be in the presence of the SEVEN: prepare.'

At this moment rose the sound of distant voices singing in concert, and gradually increasing in volume as Mick and the masks advanced. One of these attendants now notifying to their charge that he must kneel down, Mick found he rested on a cushion, while at the same time, his arms still pinioned, he seemed to be left alone.

The voices became louder and louder; Mick could distinguish the words and burthen of the hymn; he was sensible that many persons were entering the apartment; he could distinguish the measured tread of some solemn procession. Round the chamber, more than once, they moved with slow and awful step. Suddenly that movement ceased; there was a pause of a few minutes; at length a voice spoke. 'I denounce John Briars.'

'Why?' said another.

'He offers to take nothing but piece-work; the man who does piece-work is guilty of less defensible conduct than a drunkard. The worst passions of our nature are enlisted in support of piece-work. Avarice, meanness, cunning, hypocrisy, all excite and feed upon the miserable votary who works by the task and not by the hour. A man who earns by piece-work forty shillings per week, the usual wages for day-work being twenty, robs his fellows of a week's employment; therefore I denounce John Briars.'

'Let it go forth,' said the other voice; 'John Briars is denounced. If he receive another week's wages by the piece, he shall not have the option of working the week after for time. No. 87, see to John Briars.'

'I denounce Claughton and Hicks,' said another voice.

'Why?'

'They have removed Gregory Ray from being a superintendent because he belonged to this lodge.'

'Brethren, is it your pleasure that there shall be a turn-out for ten days at Claughton and Hicks?'

'It is our pleasure,' cried several voices.

'No. 34, give orders to-morrow that the works at Claughton and Hicks stop till further orders.'

'Brethren,' said another voice, 'I propose the expulsion from this union of any member who shall be known to boast of his superior ability as to either the quantity or quality of work he can do, either in public or private company. Is it your pleasure?'

'It is our pleasure.'

'Brethren,' said a voice that seemed a presiding one, 'before we proceed to the receipt of the revenue from the different districts of this lodge, there is, I

am informed, a stranger present, who prays to be admitted into our fraternity. Are all robed in the mystic robe? Are all masked in the secret mask?'

'All!'

'Then let us pray!' And thereupon, after a movement which intimated that all present were kneeling, the presiding voice offered up an extemporary prayer of power and even eloquence. This was succeeded by the Hymn of Labour, and at its conclusion the arms of the neophyte were unpinioned, and then his eyes were unbandaged.

Mick found himself in a lofty and spacious room lighted with many tapers. Its walls were hung with black cloth; at a table covered with the same material, were seated seven persons in surplices and masked, the President on a loftier seat; above which, on a pedestal, was a skeleton complete. On each side of the skeleton was a man robed and masked, holding a drawn sword; and on each side of Mick was a man in the same garb holding a battle-axe. On the table was the sacred volume open, and at a distance, ranged in order on each side of the room, was a row of persons in white robes and white masks, and holding torches.

'Michael Radley,' said the President, 'Do you voluntarily swear, in the presence of Almighty God and before these witnesses, that you will execute with zeal and alacrity, so far as in you lies, every task and injunction that the majority of your brethren, testified by the mandate of this grand committee, shall impose upon you, in furtherance of our common welfare, of which they are the sole judges; such as the chastisement of nobs, the assassination of oppressive and tyrannical masters, or the demolition of all

mills, works and shops that shall be deemed by us incorrigible? Do you swear this in the presence of Almighty God, and before these witnesses?'

'I do swear it,' replied a tremulous voice.

'Then rise and kiss that book.'

Mick slowly rose from his kneeling position, advanced with a trembling step, and bending, embraced with reverence the open volume.

Immediately every one unmasked; Devilsdust came forward, and taking Mick by the hand, led him to the President, who received him pronouncing some mystic rhymes. He was covered with a robe and presented with a torch, and then ranged in order with his companions. Thus terminated the initiation of Dandy Mick into a Trades Union.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Rights of the Masses.

'HIS lordship has not yet rung his bell, gentlemen.'

It was the valet of Lord Milford that spoke, addressing from the door of a house in Belgrave Square, about noon, a deputation from the National Convention, consisting of two of its delegates, who waited on the young viscount, in common with other members of the legislature, in order to call his particular attention to the national petition which the Convention had prepared, and which, in the course of the session, was to be presented by one of the members for Birmingham.

'I fear we are too early for these fine birds,' said one delegate to the other. 'Who is next on our list?'

'No. 27, — Street, close by; Mr. Thorough Base: he ought to be with the people, for his father was only a fiddler; but I understand he is quite an aristocrat, and has married a widow of quality.'

'Well, knock.'

Mr. Thorough Base was not at home; had received the card of the delegates apprising him of the

honour of their intended visit, but had made up his mind on the subject.

No. 18 in the same street received them more courteously. Here resided Mr. Kremlin, who, after listening with patience, if not with interest, to their statement, apprised them that forms of government were of no consequence, and domestic policy of no interest; that there was only one subject which should engage the attention of public men, because everything depended on it; that was, our external system; and that the only specific for a revival of trade and the contentment of the people, was a general settlement of the boundary questions. Finally, Mr. Kremlin urged upon the National Convention to recast their petition with this view, assuring them that on foreign policy they would have the public with them.

The deputation, in reply, might have referred, as an evidence of the general interest excited by questions of foreign policy, to the impossibility even of a leader making a house on one; and to the fact, that there are not three men in the House of Commons who even pretend to have any acquaintance with the external circumstances of the country; they might have added, that, even in such an assembly, Mr. Kremlin himself was distinguished for ignorance, for he had only one idea, and that was wrong.

Their next visit was to Wriggle, a member for a metropolitan district, a disciple of progress, who went with the times but who took particular good care to ascertain their complexion; and whose movements if expedient could partake of a regressive character. As the charter might some day turn up trumps, as well as so many other unexpected cards and colours, Wriggle gave his adhesion to it, but, of course, only

provisionally; provided, that is to say, he might vote against it at present. But he saw no harm in it, not he, and should be prepared to support it when circumstances, that is to say, the temper of the times, would permit him. More could hardly be expected from a gentleman in the delicate position in which Wriggle found himself at this moment, for he had solicited a baronetcy of the Whigs, and had secretly pledged himself to Taper to vote against them on the impending Jamaica division.

Bombastes Rip snubbed them, which was hard, for he had been one of themselves, had written confidential letters in 1831 to the secretary of the Treasury, and, 'provided his expenses were paid,' offered to come up from the manufacturing town he now represented, at the head of a hundred thousand men, and burn down Apsley House. But now Bombastes Rip talked of the great middle class; of public order and public credit. He would have said more to them, but had an appointment in the city, being an active member of the committee for raising a statue to the Duke of Wellington.

Floatwell received them in the politest manner, though he did not agree with them. What he did agree with it was difficult to say. Clever, brisk, and bustling, with a university reputation, and without patrimony, Floatwell shrunk from the toils of a profession, and in the hurry-skurry of reform found himself to his astonishment a Parliament man. There he had remained, but why, the Fates alone knew. The fun of such a thing must have evaporated with the novelty. Floatwell had entered public life in complete ignorance of every subject which could possibly engage the attention of a public man. He knew noth-

ing of history, national or constitutional law, had indeed none but puerile acquirements, and had seen nothing of life. Assiduous at committees, he gained those superficial habits of business which are competent to the conduct of ordinary affairs, and picked up in time some of the slang of economical questions. Floatwell began at once with a little success, and he kept his little success; nobody envied him it; he hoarded his sixpences without exciting any evil emulation. He was one of those characters who above all things shrink from isolation, and who imagine they are getting on if they are keeping company with some who stick like themselves. He was always an idolater of some great personage who was on the shelf, and, who, he was convinced, because the great personage assured him of it after dinner, would sooner or later turn out *the* man. At present, Floatwell swore by Lord Dunderhead; and the game of this little coterie, who dined together and thought they were a party, was to be courteous to the Convention.

After the endurance of an almost interminable lecture on the currency from Mr. Kite, who would pledge himself to the character if the charter would pledge itself to one-pound notes, the two delegates had arrived in Piccadilly, and the next member upon the list was Lord Valentine.

'It is two o'clock,' said one of the delegates, 'I think we may venture;' so they knocked at the portal of the court yard, and found they were awaited.

A private staircase led to the suite of rooms of Lord Valentine, who lived in the family mansion. The delegates were ushered through an antechamber into a saloon which opened into a fanciful conserva-

tory, where amid tall tropical plants played a fountain. The saloon was hung with blue satin, and adorned with brilliant mirrors; its coved ceiling was richly painted, and its furniture became the rest of its decorations. On one sofa were a number of portfolios, some open, full of drawings of costumes; a table of *pietra dura* was covered with richly-bound volumes that appeared to have been recently referred to; several ancient swords of extreme beauty were lying on a couch; in a corner of the room was a figure in complete armour, black and gold, richly inlaid, and grasping in its gauntlet the ancient standard of England.

The two delegates of the National Convention stared at each other, as if to express their surprise that a dweller in such an abode should ever have permitted them to enter it; but ere either of them could venture to speak, Lord Valentine made his appearance.

He was a young man, above the middle height, slender, broad-shouldered, small-waisted, of a graceful presence; he was very fair, with dark blue eyes, bright and intelligent, and features of classic precision; a small Greek cap crowned his long light-brown hair, and he was enveloped in a morning robe of Indian shawls.

'Well, gentlemen,' said his lordship, as he invited them to be seated, in a clear and cheerful voice, and with an unaffected tone of frankness which put his guests at their ease; 'I promised to see you; well, what have you got to say?'

The delegates made their accustomed statement; they wished to pledge no one; all that the people desired was a respectful discussion of their claims;

the national petition, signed by nearly a million and a half of the flower of the working-classes, was shortly to be presented to the House of Commons, praying the House to take into consideration the five points in which the working-classes deemed their best interests involved; to wit, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, annual parliaments, salaried members, and the abolition of the property qualification.

'And supposing these five points conceded,' said Lord Valentine, 'what do you mean to do?'

'The people then being at length really represented,' replied one of the delegates, 'they would decide upon the measures which the interests of the great majority require.'

'I am not so clear about that,' said Lord Valentine; 'that is the very point at issue. I do not think the great majority are the best judges of their own interests. At all events, gentlemen, the respective advantages of aristocracy and democracy are a moot point. Well, then, finding the question practically settled in this country, you will excuse me for not wishing to agitate it. I give you complete credit for the sincerity of your convictions; extend the same confidence to me. You are democrats; I am an aristocrat. My family has been ennobled for nearly three centuries; they bore a knightly name before their elevation. They have mainly and materially assisted in making England what it is. They have shed their blood in many battles; I have had two ancestors killed in the command of our fleets. You will not underrate such services, even if you do not appreciate their conduct as statesmen, though that has often been laborious, and sometimes distinguished. The finest trees in England were planted by my family; they raised

several of your most beautiful churches; they have built bridges, made roads, dug mines, and constructed canals, and drained a marsh of a million of acres which bears our name to this day, and is now one of the most flourishing portions of the country. You talk of our taxation and our wars; and of your inventions and your industry. Our wars converted an island into an empire, and at any rate developed that industry and stimulated those inventions of which you boast. You tell me that you are the delegates of the unrepresented working-classes of Mowbray. Why, what would Mowbray have been if it had not been for your aristocracy and their wars? Your town would not have existed; there would have been no working-classes there to send up delegates. In fact, you owe your very existence to us. I have told you what my ancestors have done; I am prepared, if the occasion requires it, not to disgrace them; I have inherited their great position, and I tell you fairly, gentlemen, I will not relinquish it without a struggle.'

'Will you combat the people in that suit of armour, my lord?' said one of the delegates smiling, but in a tone of kindness and respect.

'That suit of armour has combated for the people before this,' said Lord Valentine, 'for it stood by Simon de Montfort on the field of Evesham.'

'My lord,' said the other delegate, 'it is well known that you come from a great and honoured race; and we have seen enough to-day to show that in intelligence and spirit you are not unworthy of your ancestry. But the great question, which your lordship has introduced, not we, is not to be decided by a happy instance. Your ancestors may have done great things. What wonder! They were members

of a very limited class, which had the monopoly of action. And the people, have not they shed their blood in battle, though they may have commanded fleets less often than your lordship's relatives? And these mines and canals that you have excavated and constructed, these woods you have planted, these waters you have drained: had the people no hand in these creations? What share in these great works had that faculty of labour whose sacred claims we now urge, but which for centuries have been passed over in contemptuous silence? No, my lord, we call upon you to decide this question by the result. The aristocracy of England have had for three centuries the exercise of power; for the last century and a half that exercise has been uncontrolled; they form at this moment the most prosperous class that the history of the world can furnish: as rich as the Roman senators, with sources of convenience and enjoyment which modern science could alone supply. All this is not denied. Your order stands before Europe the most gorgeous of existing spectacles; though you have of late years dexterously thrown some of the odium of your polity upon that middle class which you despise, and who are despicable only because they imitate you, your tenure of power is not in reality impaired. You govern us still with absolute authority, and you govern the most miserable people on the face of the globe.'

'And is this a fair description of the people of England?' said Lord Valentine. 'A flash of rhetoric, I presume, that would place them lower than the Portuguese or the Poles, the serfs of Russia, or the lazzaroni of Naples.'

'Infinitely lower,' said the delegate, 'for they are not only degraded, but conscious of their degradation.

They no longer believe in any innate difference between the governing and the governed classes of this country. They are sufficiently enlightened to feel they are victims. Compared with the privileged classes of their own land, they are in a lower state than any other population compared with its privileged classes. All is relative, my lord, and believe me, the relations of the working-classes of England to its privileged orders are relations of enmity, and therefore of peril.'

'The people must have leaders,' said Lord Valentine.

'And they have found them,' said the delegate.

'When it comes to a push they will follow their nobility,' said Lord Valentine.

'Will their nobility lead them?' said the other delegate. 'For my part, I do not pretend to be a philosopher, and if I saw a Simon de Montfort again I should be content to fight under his banner.'

'We have an aristocracy of wealth,' said the delegate who had chiefly spoken. 'In a progressive civilisation, wealth is the only means of class distinction: but a new disposition of wealth may remove even this.'

'Ah! you want to get at our estates,' said Lord Valentine, smiling; 'but the effort on your part may resolve society into its original elements, and the old sources of distinction may again develop themselves.'

'Tall barons will not stand against Paixhans' rockets,' said the delegate. 'Modern science has vindicated the natural equality of man.'

'And I must say I am very sorry for it,' said the other delegate; 'for human strength always seems to me the natural process of settling affairs.'

'I am not surprised at your opinion,' said Lord Valentine, turning to the delegate and smiling. 'I should not be over-glad to meet you in a fray. You stand some inches above six feet or I am mistaken.'

'I was six feet two inches when I stopped growing,' said the delegate; 'and age has not stolen any of my height yet.'

'That suit of armour would fit you,' said Lord Valentine, as they all rose.

'And might I ask your lordship,' said the tall delegate, 'why it is here?'

'I am to represent Richard Cœur de Lion at the Queen's ball,' said Lord Valentine; 'and before my Sovereign I will not don a Drury Lane cuirass, so I got this up from my father's castle.'

'Ah! I almost wish the good old times of Cœur de Lion were here again,' said the tall delegate.

'And we should be serfs,' said his companion.

'I am not sure of that,' said the tall delegate. 'At any rate there was the free forest.'

'I like that young fellow,' said the tall delegate to his companion, as they descended the staircase.

'He has awful prejudices,' said his friend.

'Well, well; he has his opinions, and we have ours. But he is a man; with clear, straightforward ideas, a frank, noble presence; and as good-looking a fellow as I ever set eyes on. Where are we now?'

'We have only one more name on our list to-day, and it is at hand. Letter K, No. 1, Albany. Another member of the aristocracy, the Honourable Charles Egremont.'

'Well, I prefer them, so far as I can judge, to Wriggle, and Rip, and Thorough Base,' said the tall delegate laughing. 'I dare say we should have found

Lord Milford a very jolly fellow, if he had only been up.'

'Here we are,' said his companion, as he knocked. 'Mr. Egremont, is he at home?'

'The gentlemen of the deputation? Yes, my master gave particular orders that he was at home to you. Will you walk in, gentlemen?'

'There, you see,' said the tall delegate. 'This would be a lesson to Thorough Base.'

They sat down in an antechamber; the servant opened a mahogany folding-door which he shut after him, and announced to his master the arrival of the delegates. Egremont was seated in his library, at a round table covered with writing materials, books, and letters. On another table were arranged his parliamentary papers, and piles of blue books. The room was classically furnished. On the mantelpiece were some ancient vases, which he had brought with him from Italy, standing on each side of that picture of Allori of which we have spoken.

The servant returned to the anteroom, and announcing to the delegates that his master was ready to receive them, ushered into the presence of Egremont, Walter Gerard and Stephen Morley.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Westminster Abbey.

IT IS much to be deplored that our sacred buildings are generally closed, except at the stated periods of public resort. It is still more to be regretted that, when with difficulty entered, there is so much in their arrangements to offend the taste and outrage the feelings. In the tumult of life, a few minutes occasionally passed in the solemn shadow of some lofty and ancient aisle, exercise very often a salutary influence: they purify the heart and elevate the mind; dispel many haunting fancies, and prevent many an act which otherwise might be repented. The church would in this light still afford us a sanctuary; not against the power of the law but against the violence of our own will; not against the passions of man but against our own.

The Abbey of Westminster rises amid the strife of factions. Around its consecrated precincts some of the boldest and some of the worst deeds have been achieved or perpetrated; sacrilege, rapine, murder, and treason. Here robbery has been practised on the greatest scale known in modern ages: here ten thou-

sand manors, belonging to the order of the Templars, without any proof, scarcely with a pretext, were forfeited in one day and divided among the monarch and his chief nobles; here the great estate of the Church, which, whatever its articles of faith, belonged and still belongs to the people, was seized at various times, under various pretences, by an assembly that continually changed the religion of their country and their own by a parliamentary majority, but which never refunded the booty. Here too was brought forth that monstrous conception which even patrician Rome in its most ruthless period never equalled, the mortgaging of the industry of the country to enrich and to protect property; an act which is now bringing its retributive consequences in a degraded and alienated population. Here too have the innocent been impeached and hunted to death; and a virtuous and able monarch martyred, because, among other benefits projected for his people, he was of opinion that it was more for their advantage that the economic service of the state should be supplied by direct taxation levied by an individual known to all, than by indirect taxation, raised by an irresponsible and fluctuating assembly. But, thanks to parliamentary patriotism, the people of England were saved from ship-money, which money the wealthy paid, and only got in its stead the customs and excise, which the poor mainly supply. Rightly was King Charles surnamed the Martyr; for he was the holocaust of direct taxation. Never yet did man lay down his heroic life for so great a cause: the cause of the Church and the cause of the poor.

Even now, in the quiet times in which we live, when public robbery is out of fashion and takes the milder

title of a commission of inquiry, and when there is no treason except voting against a Minister, who, though he may have changed all the policy which you have been elected to support, expects your vote and confidence all the same; even in this age of mean passions and petty risks, it is something to step aside from Palace Yard, and instead of listening to a dull debate, where the facts are only a repetition of the blue books you have already read, and the fancy an ingenious appeal to the recrimination of Hansard, to enter the old Abbey and listen to an anthem!

This was a favourite habit of Egremont, and, though the mean discipline and sordid arrangements of the ecclesiastical body to which the guardianship of the beautiful edifice is intrusted have certainly done all that could injure and impair the holy genius of the place, it still was a habit often full of charm and consolation.

There is not perhaps another metropolitan population in the world that would tolerate such conduct as is pursued to 'that great lubber, the public,' by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, and submit in silence to be shut out from the only building in the two cities which is worthy of the name of a cathedral. But the British public will bear anything; they are so busy in speculating in railway shares.

When Egremont had entered on his first visit to the Abbey by the south transept, and beheld the boards and the spikes with which he seemed to be environed, as if the Abbey were in a state of siege; iron gates shutting him out from the solemn nave and the shadowy aisles; scarcely a glimpse to be caught of a single window; while on a dirty form some noisy vergers sat like ticket-porters or babbled like tapsters

at their ease, the visions of abbatial perfection, in which he had early and often indulged among the ruins of Marney, rose on his outraged sense, and he was then about hastily to retire from the scene he had so long purposed to visit, when suddenly the organ burst forth, a celestial symphony floated in the lofty roof, and voices of plaintive melody blended with the swelling sounds. He was fixed to the spot.

Perhaps it was some similar feeling that influenced another individual on the day after the visit of the deputation to Egremont. The sun, though in his summer heaven he had still a long course, had passed his meridian by many hours, the service was performing in the choir, and a few persons entering by the door into that part of the Abbey Church which is so well known by the name of Poets' Corner, proceeded through the unseemly stockade which the chapter have erected, and took their seats. One only, a female, declined to pass, notwithstanding the officious admonitions of the vergers that she had better move on, but approaching the iron grating that shut her out from the body of the church, looked wistfully down the long dim perspective of the beautiful southern aisle. And thus motionless she remained in contemplation, or it might be prayer, while the solemn peals of the organ and the sweet voices of the choir enjoyed that holy liberty for which she sighed, and seemed to wander at their will in every sacred recess and consecrated corner.

The sounds, those mystical and thrilling sounds that at once exalt the soul and touch the heart, ceased; the chanting of the service recommenced; the motionless form moved; and as she moved Egremont came forth from the choir, and his eye was at once caught

by the symmetry of her shape and the picturesque position which she gracefully occupied; still gazing through that grate, while the light, pouring through the western window, suffused the body of the church with a soft radiance, just touching the head of the unknown with a kind of halo. Egremont approached the transept door with a lingering pace, so that the stranger, who he observed was preparing to leave the church, might overtake him. As he reached the door, anxious to assure himself that he was not mistaken, he turned round and his eye at once caught the face of Sybil. He started, he trembled; she was not two yards distant, she evidently recognized him; he held open the swinging postern of the Abbey that she might pass, which she did, and then stopped on the outside, and said 'Mr. Franklin!'

It was therefore clear that her father had not thought fit, or had not yet had an opportunity, to communicate to Sybil the interview of yesterday. Egremont was still Mr. Franklin. This was perplexing. Egremont would have liked to be saved the pain and awkwardness of the avowal, yet it must be made, though not with unnecessary crudeness. And so at present he only expressed his delight, the unexpected delight he experienced at their meeting. And then he walked on by her side.

'Indeed,' said Sybil, 'I can easily imagine you must have been surprised at seeing me in this great city. But many things, strange and unforeseen, have happened to us since you were at Mowedale. You know, of course, you with your pursuits must know, that the people have at length resolved to summon their own Parliament in Westminster. The people of Mowbray had to send up two delegates to the Con-

vention, and they chose my father for one of them. For, so great is their confidence in him, none other would content them.'

'He must have made a great sacrifice in coming?' said Egremont.

'Oh! what are sacrifices in such a cause?' said Sybil. 'Yes; he made great sacrifices,' she continued earnestly; 'great sacrifices, and I am proud of them. Our home, which was a happy home, is gone; he has quitted the Traffords, to whom we were knit by many, many ties,' and her voice faltered, 'and for whom, I know well he would have perilled his life. And now we are parted,' said Sybil, with a sigh, 'perhaps for ever. They offered to receive me under their roof,' she continued, with emotion. 'Had I needed shelter there was another roof which has long awaited me; but I could not leave my father at such a moment. He appealed to me; and I am here. All I desire, all I live for, is to soothe and support him in his great struggle; and I should die content if the people were only free, and a Gerard had freed them.'

Egremont mused: he must disclose all, yet how embarrassing to enter into such explanations in a public thoroughfare! Should he bid her after a while farewell, and then make his confession in writing? Should he at once accompany her home, and there offer his perplexing explanations? Or should he acknowledge his interview of yesterday with Gerard, and then leave the rest to the natural consequences of that acknowledgment when Sybil met her father? Thus pondering, Egremont and Sybil quitting the court of the Abbey, entered Abingdon Street.

'Let me walk home with you,' said Egremont, as

Sybil seemed to intimate her intention here to separate.

'My father is not there,' said Sybil; 'but I will not fail to tell him that I have met his old companion.'

'Would he had been as frank!' thought Egremont. And must he quit her in this way? Impossible. 'You must indeed let me attend you!' he said aloud.

'It is not far,' said Sybil. 'We live almost in the Precinct, in an old house, with some kind old people, the brother of one of the nuns of Mowbray. The nearest way to it is straight along this street, but that is too bustling for me. I have discovered,' she added with a smile, 'a more tranquil path.' And guided by her, they turned up College Street.

'And how long have you been in London?'

'A fortnight. 'Tis a great prison. How strange it is that, in a vast city like this, one can scarcely walk alone!'

'You want Harold,' said Egremont. 'How is that most faithful of friends?'

'Poor Harold! To part with him was a pang.'

'I fear your hours must be heavy,' said Egremont.

'Oh! no,' said Sybil, 'there is so much at stake; so much to hear the moment my father returns. I take so much interest too in their discussions; and sometimes I go to hear him speak. None of them can compare with him. It seems to me that it would be impossible to resist our claims if our rulers only heard them from his lips.'

Egremont smiled. 'Your Convention is in its bloom, or rather its bud,' he said; 'all is fresh and pure now; but a little while and it will find the fate of all popular assemblies. You will have factions.'

'But why?' said Sybil. 'They are the real representatives of the people, and all that the people want is justice; that labour should be as much respected by law and society as property.'

While they thus conversed, they passed through several clean, still streets, that had rather the appearance of streets in a very quiet country town, than of abodes in the greatest city in the world, and in the vicinity of palaces and parliaments. Rarely was a shop to be remarked among the neat little tenements, many of them built of curious old brick, and all of them raised without any regard to symmetry or proportion. Not the sound of a single wheel was heard; sometimes not a single individual was visible or stirring. Making a circuitous course through this tranquil and orderly district, they at last found themselves in an open place in the centre of which rose a church of vast proportions, and built of hewn stone in that stately, not to say ponderous, style which Vanbrugh introduced.

The area round it, sufficiently ample, was formed by buildings, generally of a mean character: the long back premises of a carpenter, the straggling yard of a hackney-man; sometimes a small, narrow isolated private residence, like a waterspout in which a rat might reside; sometimes a group of houses of more pretension. In the extreme corner of this area, which was dignified by the name of Smith's Square, instead of taking a more appropriate title from the church of St. John which it encircled, was a large old house, that had been masked at the beginning of the century with a modern front of pale-coloured bricks, but which still stood in its courtyard surrounded by its iron railings, withdrawn as it were

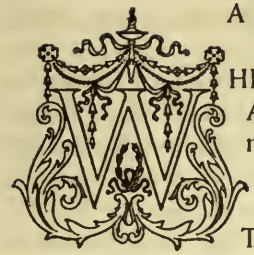
from the vulgar gaze like an individual who had known higher fortunes, and blending with his humility something of the reserve which is prompted by the memory of vanished greatness.

'This is my home,' said Sybil. 'It is a still place, and suits us well.'

Near the house was a narrow passage which was a thoroughfare into the most populous quarter of the neighbourhood. As Egremont was opening the gate of the courtyard, Gerard ascended the steps of this passage, and approached them.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A Maker of Peers.



HEN Gerard and Morley quitted the Albany after their visit to Egremont, they separated, and Stephen, whom we will accompany, proceeded in the direction of the Temple, in the vicinity of which he himself lodged, and where he was about to visit a brother journalist, who occupied chambers in that famous inn of court. As he passed under Temple Bar his eye caught a portly gentleman stepping out of a public cab, with a bundle of papers in his hand, and immediately disappearing through that well-known archway which Morley was on the point of reaching. The gentleman indeed was still in sight, descending the way, when Morley entered, who observed him drop a letter. Morley hailed him, but in vain; and fearing the stranger might disappear in one of the many inextricable courts, and so lose his letter, he ran forward, picked up the paper, and then pushed on to the person who dropped it, calling out so frequently that the stranger at length began to suspect that he himself might be the object of the salute, and stopped and looked round. Morley almost mechanically glanced at the outside of the letter, the seal of

which was broken, and which was however addressed to a name that immediately fixed his interest. The direction was to 'Baptist Hatton, Esq., Inner Temple.'

'This letter is, I believe, addressed to you, Sir,' said Morley, looking very intently upon the person to whom he spoke, a portly man and a comely; florid, gentleman-like, but with as little of the expression which Morley in imagination had associated with that Hatton over whom he once pondered, as can easily be imagined.

'Sir, I am extremely obliged to you,' said the strange gentleman; 'the letter belongs to me, though it is not addressed to me. I must have this moment dropped it. My name, Sir, is Firebrace, Sir Vavasour Firebrace, and this letter is addressed to a—a—not exactly my lawyer, but a gentleman, a professional gentleman, whom I am in the habit of frequently seeing; daily, I may say. He is employed in a great question in which I am deeply interested. Sir, I am vastly obliged to you, and I trust that you are satisfied.'

'Oh! perfectly, Sir Vavasour;' and Morley bowed; and going in different directions they separated.

'Do you happen to know a lawyer by name Hatton in this inn?' inquired Morley of his friend the journalist, when, having transacted their business, the occasion served.

'No lawyer of that name; but the famous Hatton lives here,' was the reply.

'The famous Hatton! And what is he famous for? You forget I am a provincial.'

'He has made more peers of the realm than our gracious Sovereign,' said the journalist. 'And since the reform of Parliament the only chance of a

Tory becoming a peer is the favour of Baptist Hatton; though who he is no one knows, and what he is no one can describe.'

'You speak in conundrums,' said Morley; 'I wish I could guess them. Try to adapt yourself to my somewhat simple capacity.'

'In a word, then,' said his friend, 'if you must have a definition, Hatton may rank under the genus "antiquary," though his species is more difficult to describe. He is an heraldic antiquary; a discoverer, inventor, framer, arranger of pedigrees; profound in the mysteries of genealogies; an authority I believe unrivalled in everything that concerns the constitution and elements of the House of Lords; consulted by lawyers, though not professing the law; and startling and alarming the noblest families in the country by claiming the ancient baronies which they have often assumed without authority, for obscure pretenders, many of whom he has succeeded in seating in the Parliament of his country.'

'And what part of the country did he come from; do you happen to know?' inquired Morley, evidently much interested, though he attempted to conceal his emotion.

'He may be a veritable subject of the kingdom of Cockaigne, for aught I know,' replied his friend. 'He has been buried in this inn I believe for years; for very many before I settled here; and for a long time I apprehend was sufficiently obscure, though doing, they say, a great deal in a small way; but the Mallory case made his fortune about ten years ago. That was a barony by writ of summons which had been claimed a century before, and failed. Hatton seated his man, and the precedent enabled three or four more gentlemen under his auspices to follow that example.

They were Roman Catholics, which probably brought him the Mallory case, for Hatton is of the old Church; better than that, they were all gentlemen of great estate, and there is no doubt their champion was well rewarded for his successful service. They say he is very rich. At present all the business of the country connected with descents flows into his chambers. Not a pedigree in dispute, not a peerage in abeyance, which is not submitted to his consideration. I don't know him personally; but you can now form some idea of his character; and if you want to claim a peerage,' the journalist added laughingly, 'he is your man.'

A strong impression was on the mind of Morley that this was his man; he resolved to inquire of Gerard, whom he should see in the evening, as to the fact of their Hatton being a Catholic, and if so, to call on the antiquary on the morrow.

In the meantime we must not forget one who is already making that visit. Sir Vavasour Firebrace is seated in a spacious library that looks upon the Thames and the gardens of the Temple. Though piles of parchments and papers cover the numerous tables, and in many parts intrude upon the Turkey carpet, an air of order, of comfort, and of taste, pervades the chamber. The hangings of crimson damask silk blend with the antique furniture of oak; the upper panes of the windows are tinted by the brilliant pencil of feudal Germany, while the choice volumes that line the shelves are clothed in bindings which become their rare contents. The master of this apartment was a man of ordinary height, inclined to corpulency, and in the wane of middle life, though his unwrinkled cheek, his undimmed blue eye, and his brown hair, very apparent, though he wore a cap of

black velvet, did not betray his age, or the midnight studies by which he had in a great degree acquired that learning for which he was celebrated. The general expression of his countenance was pleasing, though dashed with a trait of the sinister. He was seated in an easy chair, before a kidney table at which he was writing. Near at hand was a long tall open desk, on which were several folio volumes open, and some manuscripts which denoted that he had recently been engaged with them. At present Mr. Hatton, with his pen still in his hand and himself in a chamber-robe of the same material as his cap, leant back in his chair, while he listened to his client, Sir Vavasour. Several beautiful black-and-tan spaniels of the breed of King Charles II. were reposing near him on velvet cushions, with a haughty luxuriousness which would have become the beauties of the merry monarch; and a white Persian cat, with blue eyes, a long tail, and a visage not altogether unlike that of its master, was resting with great gravity on the writing-table, and assisting at the conference.

Sir Vavasour had evidently been delivering himself of a long narrative, to which Mr. Hatton had listened with that imperturbable patience which characterised him, and which was unquestionably one of the elements of his success. He never gave up anything, and he never interrupted anybody. And now in a silvery voice he replied to his visitor:

'What you tell me, Sir Vavasour, is what I foresaw, but which, as my influence could not affect it, I dismissed from my thoughts. You came to me for a specific object. I accomplished it. I undertook to ascertain the rights and revive the claims of the baronets of England. That was what you required of me;

I fulfilled your wish. Those rights are ascertained; those claims are revived. A great majority of the order have given in their adhesion to the organised movement. The nation is acquainted with your demands, accustomed to them, and the monarch once favourably received them. I can do no more; I do not pretend to make baronets, still less can I confer on those already made the right to wear stars and coronets, the dark green dress of Equites aurati, or white hats with white plumes of feathers. These distinctions, even if their previous usage were established, must flow from the gracious permission of the Crown, and no one could expect, in an age hostile to personal distinctions, that any ministry would recommend the Sovereign to a step which with vulgar minds would be odious, and by malignant ones might be rendered ridiculous.'

'Ridiculous!' said Sir Vavasour.

'All the world,' said Mr. Hatton, 'do not take upon these questions the same enlightened view as ourselves, Sir Vavasour. I never could for a moment believe that the Sovereign would consent to invest such a numerous body of men with such privileges.'

'But you never expressed this opinion,' said Sir Vavasour.

'You never asked for my opinion,' said Mr. Hatton; 'and if I had given it, you and your friends would not have been influenced by it. The point was one on which you might with reason hold yourselves as competent judges as I am. All you asked of me was to make out your case, and I made it out. I will venture to say a better case never left these chambers; I do not believe there is a person in the kingdom who could answer it except myself. They

have refused the order their honours, Sir Vavasour, but it is some consolation that they have never answered their case.'

'I think it only aggravates the oppression,' said Sir Vavasour, shaking his head; 'but cannot you advise any new step, Mr. Hatton? After so many years of suspense, after so much anxiety and such a vast expenditure, it really is too bad that I and Lady Firebrace should be announced at court in the same style as our fishmonger, if he happens to be a sheriff.'

'I can make a peer,' said Mr. Hatton, leaning back in his chair and playing with his seals, 'but I do not pretend to make baronets. I can place a coronet with four balls on a man's brow; but a coronet with two balls is an exercise of the prerogative with which I do not presume to interfere.'

'I mention it in the utmost confidence,' said Sir Vavasour, in a whisper; 'but Lady Firebrace has a sort of promise that, in the event of a change of government, we shall be in the first batch of peers.'

Mr. Hatton shook his head with a slight smile of contemptuous incredulity.

'Sir Robert,' he said, 'will make no peers; take my word for that. The Whigs and I have so deluged the House of Lords that you may rely upon it as a secret of state, that if the Tories come in, there will be no peers made. I know the Queen is sensitively alive to the cheapening of all honours of late years. If the Whigs go out to-morrow, mark me, they will disappoint all their friends. Their underlings have promised so many that treachery is inevitable, and if they deceive some they may as well deceive all. Perhaps they may distribute a coronet or two among themselves; and I shall this year make three; and

those are the only additions to the peerage which will occur for many years. You may rely on that. For the Tories will make none, and I have some thoughts of retiring from business.'

It is difficult to express the astonishment, the perplexity, the agitation, that pervaded the countenance of Sir Vavasour while his companion thus coolly delivered himself. High hopes extinguished and excited at the same moment; cherished promises vanishing, mysterious expectations rising up; revelations of astounding state secrets; chief ministers voluntarily renouncing their highest means of influence, and an obscure private individual distributing those distinctions which sovereigns were obliged to hoard, and to obtain which the first men in the country were ready to injure their estates and to sacrifice their honour! At length Sir Vavasour said, 'You amaze me, Mr. Hatton. I could mention to you twenty members at Boodle's, at least, who believe they will be made peers the moment the Tories come in.'

'Not a man of them,' said Hatton peremptorily. 'Tell me one of their names, and I will tell you whether they will be made peers.'

'Well, then, there is Mr. Tubbe Sweete, a county member, and his son in Parliament too; I know he has a promise.'

'I repeat to you, Sir Vavasour, the Tories will not make a single peer; the candidates must come to me; and I ask you what I can do for a Tubbe Sweete, the son of a Jamaica cooper? Are there any old families among your twenty members of Boodle's?'

'Why, I can hardly say,' said Sir Vavasour; 'there is Sir Charles Featherly, an old baronet.'

'The founder a Lord Mayor in James the First's

reign. That is not the sort of old family that I mean,' said Mr. Hatton.

'Well, there is Colonel Cockawhoop,' said Sir Vavasour. 'The Cockawhoops are a very good family I have always heard.'

'Contractors of Queen Anne; partners with Marlborough and Solomon Medina; a very good family indeed: but I do not make peers out of good families, Sir Vavasour; old families are the blocks out of which I cut my Mercuries.'

'But what do you call an old family?' said Sir Vavasour.

'Yours,' said Mr. Hatton; and he threw a full glance on the countenance on which the light rested.

'We were in the first batch of baronets,' said Sir Vavasour.

'Forget the baronets for a while,' said Hatton. 'Tell me, what was your family before James I.?'

'They always lived on their lands,' said Sir Vavasour. 'I have a room full of papers that would, perhaps, tell us something about them. Would you like to see them?'

'By all means; bring them all here. Not that I want them to inform me of your rights; I am fully acquainted with them. You would like to be a peer, Sir. Well, you are really Lord Vavasour, but there is a difficulty in establishing your undoubted right from the single writ of summons difficulty. I will not trouble you with technicalities, Sir Vavasour; sufficient that the difficulty is great, though perhaps not unmanageable. But we have no need of management. Your claim on the barony of Lovel is good: I could recommend your pursuing it, did not another more inviting still present itself. In a word, if you wish to be

Lord Bardolf, I will undertake to make you so, before, in all probability, Sir Robert Peel obtains office; and that, I should think, would gratify Lady Firebrace.'

'Indeed it would,' said Sir Vavasour, 'for if it had not been for this sort of a promise of a peerage made, I speak in great confidence, Mr. Hatton, made by Mr. Taper, my tenants would have voted for the Whigs the other day at the ——shire election, and the Conservative candidate would have been beaten. Lord Masque had almost arranged it, but Lady Firebrace would have a written promise from a high quarter, and so it fell to the ground.'

'Well, we are independent of all these petty arrangements now,' said Mr. Hatton.

'It is wonderful,' said Sir Vavasour, rising from his chair and speaking, as it were, to himself. 'And what do you think our expenses will be in this claim?' he inquired.

'Bagatelle!' said Mr. Hatton. 'Why, a dozen years ago I have known men lay out nearly half a million in land and not get two per cent. for their money, in order to obtain a borough influence, which might ultimately obtain them a spick and span coronet; and now you are going to put one on your head which will give you precedence over every peer on the roll, except three; and I made those; and it will not cost you a paltry twenty or thirty thousand pounds. Why, I know men who would give that for the precedence alone. Here!' and he rose and took up some papers from a table: 'Here is a case; a man you know, I dare say; an earl, and of a decent date as earls go; George I. The first baron was a Dutch valet of William III. Well, I am to terminate an abeyance in his favour through his mother,

and give him one of the baronies of the Herberts. He buys off the other claimant, who is already ennobled, with a larger sum than you will expend on your ancient coronet. Nor is that all. The other claimant is of French descent and name; came over at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Well, besides the hush-money, my client is to defray all the expense of attempting to transform the descendant of the silkweaver of Lyons into the heir of a Norman conqueror. So you see, Sir Vavasour, I am not unreasonable. Pah! I would sooner gain five thousand pounds by restoring you to your rights, than fifty thousand in establishing any of these pretenders in their base assumptions. I must work in my craft, Sir Vavasour, but I love the old English blood, and have it in my veins.'

'I am satisfied, Mr. Hatton,' said Sir Vavasour; 'let no time be lost. All I regret is, that you did not mention all this to me before; and then we might have saved a great deal of trouble and expense.'

'You never consulted me,' said Mr. Hatton. 'You gave me your instructions, and I obeyed them. I was sorry to see you in that mind, for to speak frankly, and I am sure now you will not be offended, my lord, for such is your real dignity, there is no title in the world for which I have such a contempt as that of a baronet.'

Sir Vavasour winced, but the future was full of glory and the present of excitement; and he wished Mr. Hatton good morning, with a promise that he would himself bring the papers on the morrow.

Mr. Hatton was buried for a few moments in a reverie, during which he played with the tail of the Persian cat.

CHAPTER XL.

Egremont's Secret.

E LEFT Sybil and Egremont just at the moment that Gerard arrived at the very threshold which they had themselves reached.

'Ah! my father,' exclaimed Sybil, and then with a faint blush, of which she was perhaps unconscious, she added, as if apprehensive Gerard would not recall his old companion, 'you remember Mr. Franklin?'

'This gentleman and myself had the pleasure of meeting yesterday,' said Gerard, embarrassed, while Egremont himself changed colour and was infinitely confused. Sybil felt surprised that her father should have met Mr. Franklin and not have mentioned a circumstance naturally interesting to her. Egremont was about to speak when the street-door was opened. And were they to part again, and no explanation? And was Sybil to be left with her father, who was evidently in no haste, perhaps had no great tendency, to give that explanation? Every feeling of an ingenuous spirit urged Egremont personally to terminate this prolonged misconception.

'You will permit me, I hope,' he said, appealing

as much to Gerard as to his daughter, 'to enter with you for a few moments.'

It was not possible to resist such a request, yet it was conceded on the part of Gerard with no cordiality. So they entered the large gloomy hall of the house, and towards the end of a long passage Gerard opened a door, and they all went into a spacious melancholy room, situate at the back of the house, and looking upon a small square plot of dank grass, in the midst of which rose a weather-stained Cupid, with one arm broken, and the other raised in the air, with a long shell to its mouth. It seemed that in old days it might have been a fountain. At the end of the plot, the blind side of a house offered a high wall which had once been painted in fresco. Though much of the coloured plaster had cracked and peeled away, and all that remained was stained and faded, still some traces of the original design might yet be detected: festive wreaths, the colonnades and perspective of a palace.

The walls of the room itself were wainscoted in panels of dark-stained wood; the window-curtains were of coarse green worsted, and encrusted by dust so ancient and irremovable, that it presented almost a lava-like appearance; the carpet, that had once been bright and showy, was entirely threadbare, and had become grey with age. There were several heavy mahogany arm-chairs in the room, a Pembroke table, and an immense unwieldy sideboard, garnished with a few wine-glasses of a deep blue colour. Over the lofty uncouth mantel was a portrait of the Marquis of Granby, which might have been a sign, and opposite to him, over the sideboard, was a large tawdry-coloured print, by Bunbury, of Ranelagh in its most

festive hour. The general appearance of the room, however, though dingy, was not squalid; and what with its spaciousness, its extreme repose, and the associations raised by such few images as it did suggest, the impression on the mind of the spectator was far from unpleasing, partaking indeed of that vague melancholy which springs from the contemplation of the past, and which at all times softens the spirit.

Gerard walked to the window and looked at the grass-plot; Sybil seating herself, invited their guest to follow her example; Egremont, not without agitation, seemed suddenly to make an effort to collect himself, and then, in a voice not distinguished by its accustomed clearness, he said, 'I explained yesterday to one whom, I hope, I may still call my friend, why I assumed a name to which I have no right.'

Sybil started a little, slightly stared, but did not speak.

'I should be happy if you also would give me credit, in taking that step, at least for motives of which I need not be ashamed; even,' he added in a hesitating voice, 'even if you deemed my conduct indiscreet.'

Their eyes met: astonishment was imprinted on the countenance of Sybil, but she uttered not a word; and her father, whose back was turned to them, did not move.

'I was told,' continued Egremont, 'that an impassable gulf divided the rich from the poor; I was told that the privileged and the people formed two nations, governed by different laws, influenced by different manners, with no thoughts or sympathies in common; with an innate inability of mutual compre-

hension. I believed that if this were indeed the case, the ruin of our common country was at hand; I would have endeavoured, feebly perchance, but not without zeal, to resist such a catastrophe; I possessed a station which entailed on me some portion of its responsibility; to obtain that knowledge which could alone qualify me for beneficial action, I resolved to live without suspicion among my fellow-subjects who were estranged from me; even void of all celebrity as I am, I could not have done that without suspicion, had I been known; they would have recoiled from my class and my name, as you yourself recoiled, Sybil, when they were once accidentally mentioned before you. These are the reasons, these the feelings, which impelled, I will not say justified, me to pass your threshold under a feigned name. I entreat you to judge kindly of my conduct; tc pardon me; and not to make me feel the bitterness that I have forfeited the good opinion of one for whom under all circumstances and in all situations, I must ever feel the highest conceivable respect, I would say a reverential regard.'

His tones of passionate emotion ceased. Sybil, with a countenance beautiful and disturbed, gazed at him for an instant, and seemed about to speak, but her trembling lips refused the office; then with an effort, turning to Gerard, she said, 'My father, I am amazed; tell me, then, who is this gentleman who addresses me?'

'The brother of Lord Marney, Sybil,' said Gerard, turning to her.

'The brother of Lord Marney!' repeated Sybil, with an air almost of stupor.

'Yes,' said Egremont; 'a member of that family of

sacrilege, of those oppressors of the people, whom you have denounced to me with such withering scorn.'

The elbow of Sybil rested on the arm of her chair, and her cheek upon her hand; as Egremont said these words she shaded her face, which was thus entirely unseen: for some moments there was silence. Then looking up with an expression grave but serene, and as if she had just emerged from some deep thinking, Sybil said, 'I am sorry for my words; sorry for the pain I unconsciously gave you; sorry indeed for all that has passed; and that my father has lost a pleasant friend.'

'And why should he be lost?' said Egremont mournfully, and yet with tenderness. 'Why should we not still be friends?'

'Oh, sir!' said Sybil, haughtily; 'I am one of those who believe the gulf is impassable. Yes,' she added, slightly but with singular grace waving her hands, and somewhat turning away her head, 'utterly impassable.'

There are tumults of the mind, when, like the great convulsions of nature, all seems anarchy and returning chaos, yet often, in those moments of vast disturbance, as in the material strife itself, some new principle of order, or some new impulse of conduct, develops itself, and controls, and regulates, and brings to an harmonious consequence, passions and elements which seemed only to threaten despair and subversion. So it was with Egremont. He looked for a moment in despair upon this maiden, walled out from sympathy by prejudices and convictions more impassable than all the mere consequences of class. He looked for a moment, but only for a moment, in

despair. He found in his tortured spirit energies that responded to the exigency of the occasion. Even the otherwise embarrassing presence of Gerard would not have prevented—but just at this moment the door opened, and Morley and another person entered the room.

CHAPTER XLI.

More Secrets.

ORLEY paused as he recognised Egremont; then advancing to Gerard, followed by his companion, he said, 'This is Mr. Hatton of whom we were speaking last night, and who claims to be an ancient acquaintance of yours.'

'Perhaps I should rather say of your poor dear father,' said Hatton, scanning Gerard with his clear blue eye; and then he added, 'He was of great service to me in my youth, and one is not apt to forget such things.'

'One ought not,' said Gerard; 'but it is a sort of memory, as I have understood, that is rather rare. For my part I remember you very well, Baptist Hatton,' said Gerard, examining his guest with almost as complete a scrutiny as he had himself experienced. 'The world has gone well with you, I am glad to hear and see.'

'*Qui laborat, orat,*' said Hatton in a silvery voice, 'is the gracious maxim of our Holy Church; and I venture to believe my prayers and vigils have been accepted, for I have laboured in my time;' and as he

was speaking these words, he turned and addressed them to Sybil.

She beheld him with no little interest; this mysterious name that had sounded so often in her young ears, and was associated with so many strange and high hopes, and some dark blending of doubt and apprehension, and discordant thoughts. Hatton in his appearance realised little of the fancies in which Sybil had sometimes indulged with regard to him. That appearance was prepossessing: a frank and even benevolent expression played upon his intelligent and handsome countenance; his once rich brown hair, still long, though thin, was so arranged as naturally to conceal his baldness; he was dressed with great simplicity, but with remarkable taste and care; nor did the repose and suavity of his manner and the hushed tone of his voice detract from the favourable effect that he always at once produced.

'*Qui laborat, orat,*' said Sybil with a smile, 'is the privilege of the people.'

'Of whom I am one,' said Hatton, bowing, well recollecting that he was addressing the daughter of a Chartist delegate.

'But is your labour, their labour?' said Sybil. 'Is yours that life of uncomplaining toil wherein there is so much of beauty and of goodness, that, by the fine maxim of our Church, it is held to include the force and efficacy of prayer?'

'I am sure that I should complain of no toil that would benefit you,' said Hatton; and then addressing himself again to Gerard, he led him to a distant part of the room where they were soon engaged in earnest converse. Morley at the same moment approached Sybil, and spoke to her in a subdued tone. Egremont,

feeling embarrassed, advanced and bade her farewell. She rose and returned his salute with some ceremony; then hesitating, while a soft expression came over her countenance, she held forth her hand, which he retained for a moment, and withdrew.

'I was with him more than an hour,' continued Morley. 'At first he recollected nothing; even the name of Gerard, though he received it as familiar to him, seemed to produce little impression; he recollected nothing of any papers; was clear that they must have been quite insignificant; whatever they were, he doubtless had them now, as he never destroyed papers; would order a search to be made for them, and so on. I was about to withdraw, when he asked me carelessly a question about your father; what he was doing, and whether he were married, and had children. This led to a long conversation, in which he suddenly seemed to take great interest. At first he talked of writing to see your father, and I offered that Gerard should call upon him. He took down your direction, in order that he might write to your father, and give him an appointment; when, observing that it was Westminster, he said that his carriage was ordered to go to the House of Lords in a quarter of an hour, and that, if not inconvenient to me, he would propose that I should at once accompany him. I thought, whatever might be the result, it must be a satisfaction to Gerard at last to see this man, of whom he has talked and thought so much; and so we are here.'

'You did well, good Stephen, as you always do,' said Sybil with a musing and abstracted air; 'no one has so much forethought, and so much energy as you.'

He threw a glance at her; and immediately withdrew it. Their eyes had met: hers were kind and calm.

'And this Egremont,' said Morley rather hurriedly and abruptly, and looking on the ground, 'how came he here? When we discovered him yesterday, your father and myself agreed that we should not mention to you the—the mystification of which we had been dupes.'

'And you did wrong,' said Sybil. 'There is no wisdom like frankness. Had you told me, he would not have been here to-day. He met and addressed me, and I only recognised an acquaintance who had once contributed so much to the pleasantness of our life. Had he not accompanied me to this door and met my father, which precipitated an explanation on his part which he found had not been given by others, I might have remained in an ignorance which hereafter might have produced inconvenience.'

'You are right,' said Morley looking at her rather keenly. 'We have all of us opened ourselves too unreservedly before this aristocrat.'

'I should hope that none of us have said to him a word that we wish to be forgotten,' said Sybil. 'He chose to wear a disguise, and can hardly quarrel with the frankness with which we spoke of his order or his family. And for the rest, he has not been injured from learning something of the feelings of the people by living among them.'

'And yet if anything were to happen to-morrow,' said Morley, 'rest assured this man has his eye on us. He can walk into the government offices like themselves and tell his tale, for, though one of the pseudo-opposition, the moment the people move, the factions become united.'

Sybil turned and looked at him, and then said, 'And what could happen to-morrow, that we should care for the government being acquainted with it or us? Do not they know everything? Do not you meet in their very sight? You pursue an avowed and legal aim by legal means, do you not? What then is there to fear? And why should anything happen that should make us apprehensive?'

'All is very well at this moment,' said Morley, 'and all may continue well; but popular assemblies breed turbulent spirits, Sybil. Your father takes a leading part; he is a great orator, and is in his element in this clamorous and fiery life. It does not much suit me; I am a man of the closet. This convention, as you well know, was never much to my taste. Their Charter is a coarse specific for our social evils. The spirit that would cure our ills must be of a deeper and finer mood.'

'Then why are you here?' said Sybil.

Morley shrugged his shoulders, and then said, 'An easy question. Questions are always easy. The fact is, in active life one cannot afford to refine. I could have wished the movement to have taken a different shape, and to have worked for a different end; but it has not done this. But it is still a movement and a great one, and I must work it for my end and try to shape it to my form. If I had refused to be a leader, I should not have prevented the movement; I should only have secured my own insignificance.'

'But my father has not these fears; he is full of hope and exultation,' said Sybil. 'And surely it is a great thing that the people have their Parliament lawfully meeting in open day, and their delegates from the whole realm declaring their grievances in language

which would not disgrace the conquering race which has in vain endeavoured to degrade them. When I heard my father speak the other night, my heart glowed with emotion; my eyes were suffused with tears; I was proud to be his daughter; and I gloried in a race of forefathers who belonged to the oppressed and not to the oppressors.'

Morley watched the deep splendour of her eye and the mantling of her radiant cheek, as she spoke these latter words with not merely animation but fervour. Her bright hair, that hung on either side her face in long tresses of luxuriant richness, was drawn off a forehead that was the very throne of thought and majesty, while her rich lip still quivered with the sensibility which expressed its impassioned truth.

'But your father, Sybil, stands alone,' at length Morley replied; 'surrounded by votaries who have nothing but enthusiasm to recommend them; and by emulous and intriguing rivals, who watch every word and action, in order that they may discredit his conduct, and ultimately secure his downfall.'

'My father's downfall!' said Sybil. 'Is he not one of themselves? And is it possible, that among the delegates of the people there can be other than one and the same object?'

'A thousand,' said Morley; 'we have already as many parties as in St. Stephen's itself.'

'You terrify me,' said Sybil. 'I knew we had fearful odds to combat against. My visit to this city alone has taught me how strong are our enemies. But I believed that we had on our side God and truth.'

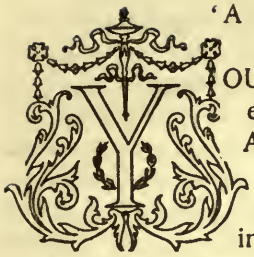
'They know neither of them in the National Convention,' said Morley. 'Our career will be a vulgar

caricature of the bad passions and the low intrigues, the factions and the failures, of our oppressors.'

At this moment Gerard and Hatton, who were sitting in the remote part of the room, rose together and came forward; and this movement interrupted the conversation of Sybil and Morley. Before, however, her father and his new friend could reach them, Hatton, as if some point on which he had not been sufficiently explicit had occurred to him, stopped, and placing his hand on Gerard's arm, withdrew him again, saying in a voice which could be heard only by the individual whom he addressed, 'You understand; I have not the slightest doubt myself of your moral right: I believe that on every principle of justice, Mowbray Castle is as much yours as the house that is built by the tenant on the lord's land: but can we prove it? We never had the legal evidence. You are in error in supposing that these papers were of any vital consequence: mere memoranda; very useful, no doubt, I hope I shall find them, but of no validity. If money were the only difficulty, trust me, it should not be wanting; I owe much to the memory of your father, my good Gerard; I would fain serve you and your daughter. I'll not tell you what I would do for you, my good Gerard. You would think me foolish; but I am alone in the world, and seeing you again and talking of old times — I really am scarcely fit for business. Go, however, I must; I have an appointment at the House of Lords. Good-bye. I must say farewell to the Lady Sybil.'

CHAPTER XLII.

'A Glorious Vision.'



OU can't have that table, sir, it is engaged,' said a waiter at the Athenæum to a member of the club who seemed unmindful of the type of appropriation which, in the shape of an inverted plate, ought to have warned him off the coveted premises.

'It is always engaged,' grumbled the member. 'Who has taken it?'

'Mr. Hatton, sir.'

And indeed at this very moment, it being about eight o'clock of the same day on which the meeting detailed in the last chapter had occurred, a handsome dark brougham with a beautiful horse was stopping in Waterloo Place before the portico of the Athenæum Club-house, from which equipage immediately emerged the prosperous person of Baptist Hatton.

This club was Hatton's only relaxation. He had never entered society; and now his habits were so formed that the effort would have been a painful one; though, with a first-rate reputation in his calling, and supposed to be rich, the openings were numerous to a familiar intercourse with those middle-

aged nameless gentlemen of easy circumstances who haunt clubs, and dine a great deal at each other's houses and chambers; men who travel regularly a little, and gossip regularly a great deal; who lead a sort of facile, slipshod existence, doing nothing, yet mightily interested in what others do; great critics of little things; profuse in minor luxuries, and inclined to the respectable practice of a decorous profligacy; peering through the window of a club-house as if they were discovering a planet; and usually much excited about things with which they have no concern, and personages who never heard of them.

All this was not in Hatton's way, who was free from all pretension, and who had acquired, from his severe habits of historical research, a respect only for what was authentic. These nonentities flitted about him, and he shrunk from an existence that seemed to him at once dull and trifling. He had a few literary acquaintances that he had made at the Antiquarian Society, of which he was a distinguished member; a vice-president of that body had introduced him to the Athenæum. It was the first and only club that Hatton had ever belonged to, and he delighted in it. He liked splendour and the light and bustle of a great establishment. They saved him from that melancholy which after a day of action is the doom of energetic celibacy. A luxurious dinner, without trouble, suited him after his exhaustion; sipping his claret, he revolved his plans. Above all, he revelled in the magnificent library, and perhaps was never happier than when, after a stimulating repast, he adjourned up stairs, and buried himself in an easy chair with Dugdale, or Selden, or an erudite treatise on forfeiture or abeyance.

To-day, however, Hatton was not in this mood. He came in exhausted and excited: ate rapidly and rather ravenously; despatched a pint of champagne; and then called for a bottle of Lafitte. His table cleared, a devilled biscuit placed before him, a cool bottle and a fresh glass, he indulged in that reverie which the tumult of his feelings and the physical requirements of existence had hitherto combined to prevent.

'A strange day,' he thought as, with an abstracted air, he filled his glass, and sipping the wine, leant back in his chair. 'The son of Walter Gerard! A Chartist delegate! The best blood in England! What would I not be, were it mine!

'Those infernal papers! They made my fortune; and yet, I know not how it is, the deed has cost me many a pang. Yet it seemed innoxious; the old man dead, insolvent; myself starving; his son ignorant of all, to whom too they could be of no use, for it required thousands to work them, and even with thousands they could only be worked by myself. Had I not done it, I should ere this probably have been swept from the surface of the earth, worn out with penury, disease, and heart-ache. And now I am Baptist Hatton, with a fortune almost large enough to buy Mowbray itself, and with knowledge that can make the proudest tremble.

'And for what object all this wealth and power? What memory shall I leave? What family shall I found? Not a relative in the world, except a solitary barbarian, from whom, when years ago I visited him as a stranger, I recoiled with unutterable loathing.

'Ah! had I a child: a child like the beautiful daughter of Gerard!'

And here mechanically Hatton filled his glass, and quaffed at once a bumper.

'And I have deprived her of a principality! That seraphic being, whose lustre even now haunts my vision; the ring of whose silver tone even now lingers in my ear. He must be a fiend who could injure her. I am that fiend. Let me see; let me see!'

And now he seemed wrapped in the very paradise of some creative vision; still he filled the glass, but this time he only sipped it, as if he were afraid to disturb the clustering images around him.

'Let me see; let me see. I could make her a baroness. Gerard is as much Baron Valence as Shrewsbury is Talbot. Her name is Sybil. Curious how, even when peasants, the good blood keeps the good old family names! The Valences were ever Sybils.

'I could make her a baroness. Yes! and I could give her wherewith to endow her state. I could compensate for the broad lands which should be hers, and which perhaps through me she has forfeited.

'Could I do more? Could I restore her to the rank she would honour, assuage these sharp pangs of conscience, and achieve the secret ambition of my life? What if my son were to be Lord Valence?

'Is it too bold? A Chartist delegate; a peasant's daughter! With all that shining beauty that I witnessed, with all the marvellous gifts that their friend Morley so descanted on, would she shrink from me? I'm not a crook-backed Richard.

'I could proffer much: I feel I could urge it plausibly. She must be very wretched. With such a form, such high imaginings, such thoughts of power

and pomp as I could breathe in her, I think she'd melt. And to one of her own faith, too! To build up a great Catholic house again; of the old blood, and the old names, and the old faith: by holy Mary, it is a glorious vision!'

CHAPTER XLIII.

Intrigues.

N THE evening of the day that Egremont had met Sybil in the Abbey of Westminster, and subsequently parted from her under circumstances so distressing, the Countess of Marney held a great assembly at the family mansion in St. James' Square, which Lord Marney intended to have let to a new club, and himself and his family to have taken refuge for a short season at an hotel; but he drove so hard a bargain that, before the lease was signed, the new club, which mainly consisted of an ingenious individual who had created himself secretary, had vanished. Then it was agreed that the family mansion should be inhabited for the season by the family; and to-night Arabella was receiving all that great world of which she herself was a distinguished ornament.

'We come to you as early as possible, my dear Arabella,' said Lady Deloraine to her daughter-in-law.

'You are always so good! Have you seen Charles? I was in hopes he would have come,' Lady Marney added, in a somewhat mournful tone.

'He is at the House; otherwise I am sure he would have been here,' said Lady Deloraine, glad that she had so good a reason for an absence which under any circumstances she well knew would have occurred.

'I fear you will be sadly in want of beaus this evening, my love. We dined at the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine's, and all our cavaliers vanished. They talk of an early division.'

'I really wish all these divisions were over,' said Lady Marney. 'They are very anti-social. Ah! here is Lady de Mowbray.'

Alfred Mountchesney hovered round Lady Joan Fitz-Warene, who was gratified by the devotion of the Cupid of May Fair. He uttered inconceivable nothings, and she replied to him in incomprehensible somethings. Her learned profundity and his vapid lightness effectively contrasted. Occasionally he caught her eye, and conveyed to her the anguish of his soul in a glance of self-complacent softness.

Lady St. Julians, leaning on the arm of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, stopped to speak to Lady Joan. Lady St. Julians was determined that the heiress of Mowbray should marry one of her sons. She watched, therefore, with a restless eye all those who attempted to monopolise Lady Joan's attention, and contrived perpetually to interfere with their manœuvres. In the midst of a delightful conversation that seemed to approach a crisis, Lady St. Julians was sure to advance, and interfere with some affectionate appeal to Lady Joan, whom she called her 'dear child' and 'sweetest love,' while she did not deign even to notice the unhappy cavalier whom she had thus as it were unhorsed.

'My sweet child!' said Lady St. Julians to Lady Joan, 'You have no idea how unhappy Frederick is this evening, but he cannot leave the House, and I fear it will be a late affair.'

Lady Joan looked as if the absence or presence of Frederick was to her a matter of great indifference, and then she added, 'I do not think the division so important as is generally imagined. A defeat upon a question of colonial government does not appear to me of sufficient weight to dissolve a cabinet.'

'Any defeat will do that now,' said Lady St. Julians, 'but to tell you the truth I am not very sanguine. Lady Deloraine says they will be beat: she says the Radicals will desert them; but I am not so sure. Why should the Radicals desert them? And what have we done for the Radicals? Had we indeed foreseen this Jamaica business, and asked some of them to dinner, or given a ball or two to their wives and daughters! I am sure if I had had the least idea that we had so good a chance of coming in, I should not have cared myself to have done something; even to have invited their women.'

'But you are such a capital partisan, Lady St. Julians,' said the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, who, with the viceroyalty of Ireland dexterously dangled before his eyes for the last two years, had become a thorough Conservative, and had almost as much confidence in Sir Robert as in Lord Stanley.

'I have made great sacrifices,' said Lady St. Julians. 'I went once and stayed a week at Lady Jenny Spinner's to gain her looby of a son and his eighty thousand a year, and Lord St. Julians proposed him at White's; and then, after all, the Whigs made him a peer! They certainly make more of their social in-

fluences than we do. That affair of that Mr. Trenchard was a blow. Losing a vote at such a critical time, when, if I had only a remote idea of what was passing through his mind, I would have even asked him to Barrowley for a couple of days.'

A foreign diplomatist of distinction had pinned Lord Marney, and was dexterously pumping him as to the probable future.

'But is the pear ripe?' said the diplomatist.

'The pear is ripe, if we have courage to pluck it,' said Lord Marney; 'but our fellows have no pluck.'

'But do you think that the Duke of Wellington——' and here the diplomatist stopped and looked up in Lord Marney's face, as if he would convey something that he would not venture to express.

'Here he is,' said Lord Marney, 'he will answer the question himself.'

Lord Deloraine and Mr. Ormsby passed by; the diplomatist addressed them; 'You have not been to the Chamber?'

'No,' said Lord Deloraine; 'but I hear there is hot work. It will be late.'

'Do you think——,' said the diplomatist, and he looked up in the face of Lord Deloraine.

'I think that in the long run everything will have an end,' said Lord Deloraine.

'Ah!' said the diplomatist.

'Bah!' said Lord Deloraine as he walked away with Mr. Ormsby. 'I remember that fellow: a sort of equivocal attaché at Paris, when we were with Monmouth at the peace: and now he is a quasi ambassador, and ribboned and starred to the chin.'

'The only stars I have got,' said Mr. Ormsby, demurely, 'are four stars in India stock.'

Lady Firebrace and Lady Maud Fitz-Warene were announced; they had just come from the Commons: a dame and damsel full of political enthusiasm. Lady Firebrace gave critical reports and disseminated many contradictory estimates of the result; Lady Maud talked only of a speech made by Lord Milford, which from the elaborate noise she made about it, you would have supposed to have been the oration of the evening; on the contrary, it had lasted only a few minutes, and in a thin house had been nearly inaudible; but then, as Lady Maud added, 'it was in such good taste!'

Alfred Mountchesney and Lady Joan Fitz-Warene passed Lady Marney, who was speaking to Lord Deloraine. 'Do you think,' said Lady Marney, 'that Mr. Mountchesney will bear away the prize?'

Lord Deloraine shook his head. 'These great heiresses can never make up their minds. The bitter drop rises in all their reveries.'

'And yet,' said Lady Marney, 'I would just as soon be married for my money as my face.'

Soon after this, there was a stir in the saloons; a murmur, the ingress of many gentlemen; among others Lord Valentine, Lord Milford, Mr. Egerton, Mr. Berners, Lord Fitz-Heron, Mr. Jermyn. The House was up; the great Jamaica division was announced; the Radicals had thrown over the Government, who, left in a majority of only five, had already intimated their sense of the unequivocal feeling of the House with respect to them. It was known that on the morrow the government would resign.

Lady Deloraine, prepared for the great result, was calm: Lady St. Julians, who had not anticipated it, was in a wild flutter of distracted triumph. A vague

yet dreadful sensation came over her, in the midst of her joy, that Lady Deloraine had been beforehand with her; had made her combinations with the new Minister; perhaps even sounded the Court. At the same time that in this agitating vision, the great offices of the palace which she had apportioned to herself and her husband seemed to elude her grasp, the claims and hopes and interests of her various children haunted her perplexed consciousness. What if Charles Egremont were to get the place which she had projected for Frederick or Augustus? What if Lord Marney became Master of the Horse? Or Lord Deloraine went again to Ireland? In her nervous excitement she credited all these catastrophes: seized upon 'the Duke' in order that Lady Deloraine might not gain his ear, and resolved to get home as soon as possible, in order that she might write without a moment's loss of time to Sir Robert.

'They will hardly go out without making some peers,' said Sir Vavasour Firebrace to Mr. Jermyn.

'Why, they have made enough.'

'Hem! I know Tubbe Sweete has a promise, and so has Cockawhoop. I don't think Cockawhoop could show again at Boodle's without a coronet.'

'I do not see why these fellows should go out,' said Mr. Ormsby. 'What does it signify whether ministers have a majority of five, or ten or twenty? In my time, a proper majority was a third of the House. That was Lord Liverpool's majority. Lord Monmouth used to say, that there were ten families in this country, who, if they could only agree, could always share the government. Ah! those were the good old times! We never had adjourned debates then; but sat it out like gentlemen who had been

used all their lives to be up all night, and then supped at Watier's afterwards.'

'Ah! my dear Ormsby,' said Mr. Berners, 'do not mention Watier's; you make my mouth water.'

'Shall you stand for Birmingham, Ormsby, if there be a dissolution?' said Lord Fitz-Heron.

'I have been asked,' said Mr. Ormsby: 'but the House of Commons is not the House of Commons of my time, and I have no wish to re-enter it. If I had a taste for business, I might be a member of the Marylebone vestry.'

'All I repeat,' said Lord Marney to his mother, as he rose from the sofa where he had been some time in conversation with her, 'is that if there be any idea that I wish Lady Marney should be a lady-in-waiting, it is an error, Lady Deloraine. I wish that to be understood. I am a domestic man, and I wish Lady Marney to be always with me; and what I want, I want for myself. I hope in arranging the Household the domestic character of every member of it will be considered. After all that has occurred, the country expects that.'

'But my dear George, I think it is really premature——'

'I dare say it is; but I recommend you, my dear mother, to be alive. I heard Lady St. Julians just now in the supper room asking the Duke to promise her that her Augustus should be a Lord of the Admiralty. She said the Treasury would not do, as there was no house, and that with such a fortune as his wife brought him he could not hire a house under a thousand a year.'

'He will not have the Admiralty,' said Lady Deloraine.

'She looks herself to the Robes.'

'Poor woman!' said Lady Deloraine.

'Is it quite true?' said a great Whig dame, to Mr. Egerton, one of her own party.

'Quite,' he said.

'I can endure anything except Lady St. Julians' glance of triumph,' said the Whig dame. 'I really think, if it were only to ease her Majesty from such an infliction, they ought to have held on.'

'And must the Household be changed?' said Mr. Egerton.

'Do not look so serious,' said the Whig dame, smiling with fascination; 'we are surrounded by the enemy.'

'Will you be at home to-morrow early?' said Mr. Egerton.

'As early as you please.'

'Very well, we will talk then. Lady Charlotte has heard something: *nous verrons.*'

'Courage; we have the Court with us, and the country cares for nothing.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Flattering Tongue of Hope.

'IT IS all right,' said Mr. Tadpole. 'They are out. Lord Melbourne has been with the Queen, and recommended her Majesty to send for the Duke, and the Duke has recommended her Majesty to send for Sir Robert.'

'Are you sure?' said Mr. Taper.

'I tell you Sir Robert is on his road to the palace at this moment; I saw him pass, full dressed.'

'It is too much,' said Mr. Taper.

'Now what are we to do?' said Mr. Tadpole.

'We must not dissolve,' said Mr. Taper. 'We have no cry.'

'As much cry as the other fellows,' said Mr. Tadpole; 'but no one of course would think of dissolution before the next registration. No, no; this is a very manageable Parliament, depend upon it. The malcontent Radicals who have turned them out are not going to bring them in. That makes us equal. Then we have an important section to work upon: the sneaks, the men who are afraid of a dissolution. I will be bound we make a good working Conservative majority of five-and-twenty out of the sneaks.'

'With the Treasury patronage,' said Mr. Taper; 'fear and favour combined. An impending dissolution, and all the places we refuse our own men, we may count on the sneaks.'

'Then there are several religious men who have wanted an excuse for a long time to rat,' said Mr. Tadpole. 'We must get Sir Robert to make some kind of a religious move, and that will secure Sir Litany Lax, and young Mr. Salem.'

'It will never do to throw over the Church Commission,' said Mr. Taper. 'Commissions and committees ought always to be supported.'

'Besides, it will frighten the saints,' said Mr. Tadpole. 'If we could get him to speak at Exeter Hall, were it only a slavery meeting, that would do.'

'It is difficult,' said Taper; 'he must be pledged to nothing; not even to the right of search. Yet if we could get up something with a good deal of sentiment, and no principle involved; referring only to the past, but with his practised powers touching the present. What do you think of a monument to Wilberforce, or a commemoration of Clarkson?'

'There is a good deal in that,' said Mr. Tadpole. 'At present go about and keep our fellows in good humour. Whisper nothings that sound like something. But be discreet; do not let there be more than half a hundred fellows who believe they are going to be under-Secretaries of State. And be cautious about titles. If they push you, give a wink, and press your finger to your lip. I must call here,' continued Mr. Tadpole, as he stopped before the house of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine. 'This gentleman is my particular charge. I have been cooking him these three years. I had two notes from him

yesterday, and can delay a visit no longer. The worst of it is, he expects that I shall bear him the non-official announcement of his being sent to Ireland, of which he has about as much chance as I have of being Governor-General of India. It must be confessed, ours is critical work sometimes, friend Taper; but never mind, what we have to do to individuals, Peel has to do with a nation, and therefore we ought not to complain.'

The Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine wanted Ireland, and Lord de Mowbray wanted the Garter. Lord Marney, who wanted the Buckhounds, was convinced that neither of his friends had the slightest chance of obtaining their respective objects, but believed that he had a very good one of securing his own if he used them for his purpose, and persuaded them to combine together for the common good. So at his suggestion they had all met together at the duke's, and were in full conference on the present state of affairs, while Tadpole and Taper were engaged in that interesting and instructive conversation of which we have snatched a passage.

'You may depend upon it,' said Lord Marney, 'that nothing is to be done by delicacy. It is not delicacy that rules the House of Lords. What has kept us silent for years? Threats; and threats used in the most downright manner. We were told that if we did not conform absolutely, and without appeal, to the will and pleasure of one individual, the cards would be thrown up. We gave in; the game has been played, and won. I am not at all clear that it has been won by those tactics, but gained it is; and now what shall we do? In my opinion it is high time to get rid of the dictatorship. The new ruse now for

the palace is to persuade her Majesty that Peel is the only man who can manage the House of Lords. Well, then, it is exactly the time to make certain persons understand that the House of Lords are not going to be tools any longer merely for other people. Rely upon it, a bold united front at this moment would be a spoke in the wheel. We three form the nucleus; there are plenty to gather round. I have written to Marisforde; he is quite ripe. Lord Hounslow will be here to-morrow. The thing is to be done; and if we are not firm the grand Conservative triumph will only end in securing the best posts both at home and abroad for one too powerful family.'

'Who had never been heard of in the time of my father,' said the duke.

'Nor in the time of mine,' said Lord de Mowbray.

'Royal and Norman blood like ours,' said Lord Marney, 'is not to be thrown over in that way.'

It was just at this moment that a servant entered with a card, when the duke, looking at it, said, 'It is Tadpole; shall we have him in? I dare say he will tell us something.' And, notwithstanding the important character of their conference, political curiosity, and perhaps some private feeling which not one of them cared to acknowledge, made them unanimously agree that Mr. Tadpole should be admitted.

'Lord Marney and Lord de Mowbray with the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine,' thought Mr. Tadpole, as he was ushered into the library; and his eye, practised in machinations and prophetic in manœuvres, surveyed the three nobles. 'This looks like business and perhaps means mischief. Very lucky I called!' With an honest smile he saluted them all.

'What news from the palace, Tadpole?' inquired the duke.

'Sir Robert is there,' replied Tadpole.

'That is good news,' exclaimed his Grace, echoed by Lord de Mowbray, and backed up with a faint bravo from Lord Marney.

Then arose a conversation in which all affected much interest respecting the Jamaica debate; whether the Whigs had originally intended to resign; whether it were Lord Melbourne or Lord John who had insisted on the step; whether, if postponed, they could have tided over the session; and so on. Tadpole, who was somewhat earnest in his talk, seemed to have pinned the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine; Lord Marney, who wanted to say a word alone to Lord de Mowbray, had dexterously drawn that personage aside on the pretence of looking at a picture. Tadpole, who, with a most frank and unsophisticated mien, had an eye for every corner of a room, seized the opportunity for which he had been long cruising. 'I don't pretend to be behind the scenes, duke, but it was said to me to-day, "Tadpole, if you do chance to see the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, you may say that positively Lord Killcroppy will not go to Ireland."'

A smile of satisfaction played over the handsome face of the duke: instantly suppressed lest it might excite suspicion; and then, with a friendly and significant nod, that intimated to Tadpole not to dwell on the subject at the present moment, the duke with a rather uninterested air recurred to the Jamaica debate, and soon after appealed on some domestic point to his son-in-law. This broke up the conversation between Lord de Mowbray and Lord Marney. Lord de Mowbray advancing, was met accidentally on purpose

by Mr. Tadpole, who seemed anxious to push forward to Lord Marney.

'You have heard of Lord Ribbonville?' said Tadpole in a suppressed tone.

'No; what?'

'Can't live the day out. How fortunate Sir Robert is! Two garters to begin with!'

Tadpole had now succeeded in tackling Lord Marney alone; the other peers were far out of earshot. 'I don't pretend to be behind the scenes, my lord,' said the honest gentleman in a peculiarly confidential tone, and with a glance that spoke volumes of state secrecy; 'but it was said to me today, "Tadpole, if you do chance to meet Lord Marney, you may say that positively Lord Rambrooke will not have the Buckhounds."'

'All I want,' said Lord Marney, 'is to see men of character about her Majesty. This is a domestic country, and the country expects that no nobleman should take household office whose private character is not inexpugnable. Now that fellow Rambrooke keeps a Frenchwoman. It is not much known, but it is a fact.'

'Dreadful!' exclaimed Mr. Tadpole. 'I have no doubt of it. But he has no chance of the Buckhounds, you may rely on that. Private character is to be the basis of the new government. Since the Reform Act, that is a qualification much more esteemed by the constituency than public services. We must go with the times, my lord. A virtuous middle class shrinks with horror from French actresses; and the Wesleyans—the Wesleyans must be considered, Lord Marney.'

'I always subscribe to them,' said his lordship.

'Ah!' said Mr. Tadpole, mysteriously, 'I am glad to hear that. Nothing I have heard to-day has given me so much pleasure as those few words. One may hardly jest on such a subject,' he added, with a sanctimonious air; 'but I think I may say,' and here he broke into a horse smile, 'I think I may say that those subscriptions will not be without their fruit.' And with a bow honest Tadpole disappeared, saying to himself as he left the house, 'If you were ready to be conspirators when I entered the room, my lords, you were at least prepared to be traitors when I quitted it.'

In the meantime Lord Marney, in the best possible humour, said to Lord de Mowbray, 'You are going to White's, are you? If so, take me.'

'I am sorry, my dear lord, but I have an appointment in the city. I have to go to the Temple, and I am already behind my time.'

CHAPTER XLV.

Fears of Lord de Mowbray.

AND why was Lord de Mowbray going to the Temple? He had received the day before, when he came home to dress, a disagreeable letter from some lawyers, apprising him that they were instructed by their client, Mr. Walter Gerard, to commence proceedings against his lordship on a writ of right, with respect to his manors of Mowbray, Valence, Mowedale, Mowbray Valence, and several others carefully enumerated in their precise epistle, the catalogue of which read like an extract from Domesday Book.

More than twenty years had elapsed since the question had been mooted; and though the discussion had left upon Lord de Mowbray an impression from which at times he had never entirely recovered, still circumstances had occurred since the last proceedings which gave him a moral, if not a legal, conviction that he should be disturbed no more. And these were the circumstances: Lord de Mowbray, after the death of the father of Walter Gerard, had found himself in communication with the agent who had developed and pursued the claim for the yeoman, and

had purchased for a good round sum the documents on which that claim was founded, and by which alone apparently that claim could be sustained.

The vendor of these muniments was Baptist Hatton, and the sum which he obtained for them, by allowing him to settle in the metropolis, pursue his studies, purchase his library and collections, and otherwise give himself that fair field which brains without capital can seldom command, was in fact the foundation of his fortune. Many years afterwards Lord de Mowbray had recognised Hatton in the prosperous parliamentary agent who often appeared at the bar of the House of Lords, and before committees of privilege, and who gradually obtained an unrivalled reputation and employment in peerage cases. Lord de Mowbray renewed his acquaintance with a man who was successful; bowed to Hatton whenever they met; and finally consulted him respecting the barony of Valence, which had been in the old Fitz-Warene and Mowbray families, and to which it was thought the present earl might prefer some hocus-pocus claim through his deceased mother; so that, however recent was his date as an English earl, he might figure on the roll as a Plantagenet baron, which in the course of another century would complete the grand mystification of high nobility. The death of his son, dexterously christened Valence, had a little damped his ardour in this respect; but still there was a sufficiently intimate connection kept up between him and Hatton; so that, before he placed the letter he had received in the hands of his lawyers, he thought it desirable to consult his ancient ally.

This was the reason that Lord de Mowbray was at the present moment seated in the same chair, in

the same library, as was a few days back that worthy baronet, Sir Vavasour Firebrace. Mr. Hatton was at the same table similarly employed; his Persian cat on his right hand, and his choice spaniels reposing on their cushions at his feet.

Mr. Hatton held forward his hand to receive the letter of which Lord de Mowbray had been speaking to him, and which he read with great attention, weighing, as it were, each word. Singular! as the letter had been written by himself, and the firm who signed it were only his instruments, obeying the spring of the master hand.

'Very remarkable!' said Mr. Hatton.

'Is it not?' said Lord de Mowbray.

'And your lordship received this yesterday?'

'Yesterday. I lost no time in communicating with you.'

'Jubb and Jinks,' continued Mr. Hatton, musingly, surveying the signature of the letter. 'A respectable firm.'

'That makes it more strange,' said his lordship.

'It does,' said Mr. Hatton.

'A respectable firm would hardly embark in such a proceeding without some show of pretext,' said Lord de Mowbray.

'Hardly,' said Mr. Hatton.

'But what can they have?' urged his lordship.

'What, indeed?' said Mr. Hatton. 'Mr. Walter Gerard, without his pedigree, is a mere flash in the pan; and I defy him to prove anything without the deed of '77.'

'Well, he has not got that,' said Lord de Mowbray.

'Safe, of course?' said Mr. Hatton.

'Certain. I almost wish I had burnt it as well as the whole boxful.'

'Destroy that deed and the other muniments, and the Earl de Mowbray will never be Baron Valence,' said Mr. Hatton.

'But what use are these deeds now?' said his lordship. 'If we produce them, we may give a colour to this fellow's claim.'

'Time will settle his claim,' said Mr. Hatton; 'it will mature yours. You can wait.'

'Alas! since the death of my poor boy—'

'It has become doubly important. Substantiate the barony, it will descend to your eldest daughter, who, even if married, will retain your name. Your family will live, and ennobled. The Fitz-Warenes Lords Valence will yield to none in antiquity; and, as to rank, so long as Mowbray Castle belongs to them, the revival of the earldom is safe at the first coronation, or the first ministry that exists with a balanced state of parties.'

'That is the right view of the case,' said Lord de Mowbray; 'and what do you advise?'

'Be calm, and you have nothing to fear. This is the mere revival of an old claim, too vast to be allowed to lapse from desuetude. Your documents, you say, are all secure?'

'Be sure of that. They are at this moment in the muniment room of the great tower of Mowbray Castle; in the same iron box and in the same cabinet they were deposited—'

'When, by placing them in your hands,' said Mr. Hatton, finishing a sentence which might have been awkward, 'I had the satisfaction of confirming the rights and calming the anxieties of one of our ancient

houses. I would recommend your lordship to instruct your lawyers to appear to this writ as a matter of course. But enter into no details, no unnecessary confidence with them. They are needless. Treat the matter lightly, especially to them. You will hear no more of it.'

'You feel confidence?'

'Perfect. Walter Gerard has no documents of any kind. Whatever his claim might be, good or bad, the only evidence that can prove his pedigree is in your possession, and the only use to which it ever will be put, will be in due time to seat your grandson in the House of Lords.'

'I am glad I called upon you,' said Lord de Mowbray.

'To be sure. Your lordship can speak to me without reserve, and I am used to these start-ups. It is part of the trade; but an old soldier is not to be deceived by such feints.'

'Clearly a feint, you think?'

'A feint! a feint.'

'Good morning. I am glad I called. How goes on my friend Sir Vavasour?'

'Oh! I shall land him at last.'

'Well, he is an excellent neighbourly man. I have a great respect for Sir Vavasour. Would you dine with me, Mr. Hatton, on Thursday? It would give me and Lady de Mowbray great pleasure.'

'Your lordship is extremely kind,' said Mr. Hatton bowing with a slight sarcastic smile, 'but I am a hermit.'

'But your friends should see you sometimes,' said Lord de Mowbray.

'Your lordship is too good, but I am a mere man

of business, and know my position. I feel I am not at home in ladies' society.'

'Well then, come to-morrow: I am alone, and I will ask some persons to meet you whom you know and like: Sir Vavasour and Lord Shaftesbury, and a most learned Frenchman who is over here, a Vicomte de Narbonne, who is very anxious to make your acquaintance. Your name is current, I can tell you, at Paris.'

'Your lordship is too good; another day: I have a great pressure of affairs at present.'

'Well, well; so be it. Good morning, Mr. Hatton.'

Hatton bowed lowly. The moment the door was shut, rubbing his hands, he said, 'In the same box and in the same cabinet: the muniment room in the great tower of Mowbray Castle! They exist and I know their whereabouts. I'll have 'em.'

CHAPTER XLVI.

An Awkward 'Hitch.'

TWO and even three days had rolled over since Mr. Tadpole had reported Sir Robert on his way to the palace, and marvellously little had transpired. It was of course known that a cabinet was in formation, and the daily papers reported to the public the diurnal visits of certain noble lords and right honourable gentlemen to the new first Minister. But the world of high politics had suddenly become so cautious that nothing leaked out. Even gossip was at fault. Lord Marney had not received the Buckhounds, though he never quitted his house for ride or lounge without leaving precise instructions with Captain Grouse as to the identical time he should return home, so that his acceptance should not be delayed. Ireland was not yet governed by the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, and the Earl de Mowbray was still ungartered. These three distinguished noblemen were all of them anxious—a little fidgety; but at the same time it was not even whispered that Lord Rambrooke or any other lord had received the post which Lord Marney had appropriated to himself; nor had Lord Killcroppy had

a suspicious interview with the Prime Minister, which kept the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine quiet though not easy; while not a shadow of coming events had glanced over the vacant stall of Lord Ribbonville in St. George's Chapel, and this made Lord de Mowbray tranquil, though scarcely content. In the meantime, daily and hourly they all pumped Mr. Tadpole, who did not find it difficult to keep up his reputation for discretion; for, knowing nothing, and beginning himself to be perplexed at the protracted silence, he took refuge in oracular mystery, and delivered himself of certain Delphic sentences, which adroitly satisfied those who consulted him while they never committed himself.

At length one morning there was an odd whisper in the circle of first initiation. The blood mantled on the cheek of Lady St. Julians; Lady Deloraine turned pale. Lady Firebrace wrote confidential notes with the same pen to Mr. Tadpole and Lord Masque. Lord Marney called early in the morning on the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, and already found Lord de Mowbray there. The clubs were crowded even at noon. Everywhere a mysterious bustle and an awful stir.

What could be the matter? What has happened?

'It is true,' said Mr. Egerton to Mr. Berners at Brooks'.

'Is it true?' asked Mr. Jermyn of Lord Valentine at the Carlton.

'I heard it last night at Crockford's,' said Mr. Ormsby; 'one always hears things there four-and-twenty hours before other places.'

The world was employed the whole of the morning in asking and answering this important question, 'Is it true?' Towards dinner-time, it was settled

universally in the affirmative, and then the world went out to dine and to ascertain why it was true and how it was true.

And now, what had really happened? What had happened was what is commonly called a 'hitch.' There was undoubtedly a hitch somewhere and somehow; a hitch in the construction of the new cabinet. Who could have thought it? The Whig ministers it seems had resigned, but somehow or other had not entirely and completely gone out. What a constitutional dilemma! The Houses must evidently meet, address the throne, and impeach its obstinate counsellors. Clearly the right course, and party feeling ran so high that it was not impossible that something might be done. At any rate, it was a capital opportunity for the House of Lords to pluck up a little courage and take what is called, in high political jargon, the initiative. Lord Marney, at the suggestion of Mr. Tadpole, was quite ready to do this; and so was the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine, and almost the Earl de Mowbray.

But then, when all seemed ripe and ready, and there appeared a probability of the 'Independence of the House of Lords' being again the favourite toast of Conservative dinners, the oddest rumour in the world got about, which threw such ridicule on these great constitutional movements *in petto*, that, even with the Buckhounds in the distance and Tadpole at his elbow, Lord Marney hesitated. It seemed, though of course no one could for a moment credit it, that these wrong-headed, rebellious ministers who would not go out, wore — petticoats!

And the great Jamaica debate that had been cooked so long, and the anxiously-expected yet al-

most despaired-of defection of the independent Radical section, and the full-dressed visit to the palace that had gladdened the heart of Tadpole, were they all to end in this? Was Conservatism, that mighty mystery of the nineteenth century, was it after all to be brained by a fan?

Since the farce of the 'Invincibles' nothing had ever been so ludicrously successful.

Lady Deloraine consoled herself for the 'Bedchamber Plot,' by declaring that Lady St. Julians was indirectly the cause of it, and that, had it not been for the anticipation of her official entrance into the royal apartments, the conspiracy would not have been more real than the Meal-tub plot, or any other of the many imaginary machinations that still haunt the page of history, and occasionally flit about the prejudiced memory of nations. Lady St. Julians, on the contrary, wrung her hands over the unhappy fate of her enthralled Sovereign, deprived of her faithful presence, and obliged to put up with the society of personages of whom she knew nothing, and who called themselves the friends of her youth. The ministers who had missed, especially those who had received, their appointments looked as all men do when they are jilted: embarrassed, and affecting an awkward ease; as if they knew something which, if they told, would free them from the supreme ridicule of their situation, but which, as men of delicacy and honour, they refrained from revealing. All those who had been in fluttering hopes, however faint, of receiving preferment, took courage now that the occasion had passed, and loudly complained of their cruel and undeniable deprivation. The constitution was wounded in their persons. Some fifty gentlemen, who had not

been appointed under-Secretaries of State, moaned over the martyrdom of young ambition.

'Peel ought to have taken office,' said Lord Marney. 'What are the women to us?'

'Peel ought to have taken office,' said the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine. 'He should have remembered how much he owed to Ireland.'

'Peel ought to have taken office,' said Lord de Mowbray. 'The garter will become now a mere party badge.'

Perhaps it may be allowed to the impartial pen that traces these memoirs of our times to agree, though for a different reason, with these distinguished followers of Sir Robert Peel. One may be permitted to think that, under all circumstances, he should have taken office in 1839. His withdrawal seems to have been a mistake. In the great heat of parliamentary faction which had prevailed since 1831, the royal prerogative, which, unfortunately for the rights and liberties and social welfare of the people, had since 1688 been more or less oppressed, had waned fainter and fainter. A youthful princess on the throne, whose appearance touched the imagination, and to whom her people were generally inclined to ascribe something of that decision of character which becomes those born to command, offered a favourable opportunity to restore the exercise of that regal authority, the usurpation of whose functions has entailed on the people of England so much suffering, and so much degradation. It was unfortunate that one who, if any, should have occupied the proud and national position of the leader of the Tory party, the chief of the people and the champion of the throne, should have commenced his career as minister under Victoria

by an unseemly contrariety to the personal wishes of the Queen. The reaction of public opinion, disgusted with years of parliamentary tumult and the incoherence of party legislation, the balanced state in the kingdom of political parties themselves, the personal character of the Sovereign; these were all causes which intimated that a movement in favour of prerogative was at hand. The leader of the Tory party should have vindicated his natural position, and availed himself of the gracious occasion; he missed it; and, as the occasion was inevitable, the Whigs enjoyed its occurrence. And thus England witnessed for the first time the portentous anomaly of the oligarchical or Venetian party, which had in the old days destroyed the free monarchy of England, retaining power merely by the favour of the Court.

But we forget, Sir Robert Peel is not the leader of the Tory party; the party that resisted the ruinous mystification that metamorphosed direct taxation by the Crown into indirect taxation by the Commons; that denounced the system which mortgaged industry to protect property; the party that ruled Ireland by a scheme which reconciled both churches, and by a series of parliaments which counted among them lords and commons of both religions; that has maintained at all times the territorial constitution of England as the only basis and security for local government, and which nevertheless once laid on the table of the House of Commons a commercial tariff negotiated at Utrecht, which is the most rational that was ever devised by statesmen; a party that has prevented the Church from being the salaried agent of the state, and has supported through many struggles the parochial polity of the country which secures to every labourer a home.

In a parliamentary sense, that great party has ceased to exist; but I will believe that it still lives in the thought and sentiment and consecrated memory of the English nation. It has its origin in great principles and in noble instincts; it sympathises with the lowly, it looks up to the Most High; it can count its heroes and its martyrs; they have met in its behalf plunder, proscription, and death. Nor, when it finally yielded to the iron progress of oligarchical supremacy, was its catastrophe inglorious. Its genius was vindicated in golden sentences and with fervent arguments of impassioned logic by St. John; and breathed in the intrepid eloquence and patriot soul of William Wyndham. Even now it is not dead, but sleepeth; and, in an age of political materialism, of confused purposes and perplexed intelligence, that aspires only to wealth because it has faith in no other accomplishment, as men rifle cargoes on the verge of shipwreck, Toryism will yet rise from the tomb over which Bolingbroke shed his last tear, to bring back strength to the Crown, liberty to the subject, and to announce that power has only one duty: to secure the social welfare of the people.

CHAPTER XLVII.

'The Gulf Is Impassable.'

URING the week of political agitation which terminated with the inglorious catastrophe of the Bedchamber Plot, Sybil remained tranquil, and would have been scarcely conscious of what was disturbing so many right honourable hearts, had it not been for the incidental notice of their transactions by her father and his friends. To the Chartists, indeed, the factious embroilment at first was of no great moment, except as the breaking up and formation of cabinets might delay the presentation of the National Petition. They had long ceased to distinguish between the two parties who then and now contend for power. And they were right. Between the noble lord who goes out, and the right honourable gentleman who comes in, where is the distinctive principle? A shadowy difference may be stimulated in opposition, to serve a cry and stimulate the hustings; but the mask is not worn, even in Downing Streeet; and the conscientious Conservative seeks, in the pigeon-holes of a Whig bureau, for the measures against which for ten years he has been sanctioning, by the speaking silence of an approving nod, a general wail of frenzied alarm.

Once it was otherwise; once the people recognised a party in the state whose principles identified them with the rights and privileges of the multitude: but when they found the parochial constitution of the country sacrificed without a struggle, and a rude assault made on all local influences in order to establish a severely organised centralisation, a blow was given to the influence of the priest and of the gentleman, the ancient champions of the people against arbitrary courts and rapacious parliaments, from which they will find that it requires no ordinary courage and wisdom to recover.

The unexpected termination of the events of May, 1839, in the re-establishment in power of a party confessedly too weak to carry on the parliamentary government of the country, was viewed however by the Chartists in a very different spirit from that with which they had witnessed the outbreak of these transactions. It had unquestionably a tendency to animate their efforts, and imparted a bolder tone to their future plans and movements. They were encouraged to try a fall with a feeble administration. Gerard from this moment became engrossed in affairs; his correspondence greatly increased; and he was so much occupied that Sybil saw daily less and less of her father.

It was on the morning after the day that Hatton had made his first and unlooked-for visit in Smith Square, that some of the delegates, who had caught the rumour of the resignation of the Whigs, had called early on Gerard, and he had soon after left the house in their company; and Sybil was alone. The strange incidents of the preceding day were revolving in her mind, as her eye wandered vaguely over her book.

The presence of that Hatton who had so often, and in such different scenes, occupied their conversation; the re-appearance of that stranger, whose unexpected entrance into their little world had eighteen months ago so often lent interest and pleasure to their life: these were materials for pensive sentiment. Mr. Franklin had left some gracious memories with Sybil; the natural legacy of one so refined, intelligent, and gentle, whose temper seemed never ruffled, and who evidently so sincerely relished their society. Mowedale rose before her in all the golden beauty of its autumnal hour; their wild rambles and hearty greetings, and earnest converse when her father returned from his daily duties, and his eye kindled with pleasure as the accustomed knock announced the arrival of his almost daily companion. In spite of the excitement of the passing moment, its high hopes and glorious aspirations, and visions perchance of greatness and of power, the eye of Sybil was dimmed with emotion as she recalled that innocent and tranquil dream.

Her father had heard from Franklin after his departure more than once; but his letters, though abounding in frank expressions of deep interest in the welfare of Gerard and his daughter, were in some degree constrained; a kind of reserve seemed to envelop him; they never learnt anything of his life and duties; he seemed sometimes, as it were, meditating a departure from his country. There was undoubtedly about him something mysterious and unsatisfactory. Morley was of opinion that he was a spy; Gerard, less suspicious, ultimately concluded that he was harassed by his creditors, and when at Mowedale was probably hiding from them.

And now the mystery was at length dissolved. And what an explanation! A Norman, a noble, an oppressor of the people, a plunderer of the Church: all the characters and capacities that Sybil had been bred to look upon with fear and aversion, and to recognise as the authors of the degradation of her race.

Sybil sighed; the door opened, and Egremont stood before her. The blood rose to her cheek, her heart trembled; for the first time in his presence she felt embarrassed and constrained. His countenance on the contrary was collected, serious, and pale.

'I am an intruder,' he said advancing, 'but I wish much to speak to you,' and he seated himself near her. There was a momentary pause. 'You seemed to treat with scorn yesterday,' resumed Egremont, in accents less sustained, 'the belief that sympathy was independent of the mere accidents of position. Pardon me, Sybil, but even you may be prejudiced.' He paused.

'I should be sorry to treat anything you said with scorn,' replied Sybil, in a subdued tone. 'Many things happened yesterday,' she added, 'which might be offered as some excuse for an unguarded word.'

'Would that it had been unguarded!' said Egremont, in a voice of melancholy. 'I could have endured it with less repining. No, Sybil, I have known you, I have had the happiness and the sorrow of knowing you too well to doubt the convictions of your mind, or to believe that they can be lightly removed, and yet I would strive to remove them. You look upon me as an enemy, as a natural foe, because I am born among the privileged. I am a man,

Sybil, as well as a noble.' Again he paused; she looked down, but did not speak.

'And can I not feel for men, my fellows, whatever be their lot? I know you will deny it; but you are in error, Sybil; you have formed your opinions upon tradition, not upon experience. The world that exists is not the world of which you have read; the class that calls itself your superior is not the same class as ruled in the time of your fathers. There is a change in them as in all other things, and I participate in that change. I shared it before I knew you, Sybil; and if it touched me then, at least believe it does not influence me less now.'

'If there be a change,' said Sybil, 'it is because in some degree the people have learnt their strength.'

'Ah! dismiss from your mind those fallacious fancies,' said Egremont. 'The people are not strong; the people never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only in their suffering and confusion. It is civilisation that has effected, that is effecting, this change. It is that increased knowledge of themselves that teaches the educated their social duties. There is a dayspring in the history of this nation, which perhaps those only who are on the mountain tops can as yet recognise. You deem you are in darkness, and I see a dawn. The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors, Sybil, as you persist in believing. Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts, are open to the responsibility of their position. But the work that is before them is no holiday-work. It is not the fever of superficial impulse that can remove the deep-fixed barriers of centuries of ignorance and crime. Enough that their sympathies are awakened;

time and thought will bring the rest. They are the natural leaders of the people, Sybil; believe me, they are the only ones.'

'The leaders of the people are those whom the people trust,' said Sybil, rather haughtily.

'And who may betray them,' said Egremont.

'Betray them!' exclaimed Sybil. 'And can you believe that my father—'

'No, no; you can feel, Sybil, though I cannot express, how much I honour your father. But he stands alone in the singleness and purity of his heart. Who surround him?'

'Those whom the people have also chosen; and from a like confidence in their virtues and abilities. They are a senate supported by the sympathy of millions, with only one object in view, the emancipation of their race. It is a sublime spectacle, these delegates of labour advocating the sacred cause in a manner which might shame your haughty factions. What can resist a demonstration so truly national? What can withstand the supremacy of its moral power?'

Her eye met the glance of Egremont. That brow, full of thought and majesty, was fixed on his. He encountered that face radiant as a seraph's; those dark eyes flashing with the inspiration of the martyr.

Egremont rose, moved slowly to the window, gazed in abstraction for a few moments on the little garden, with its dank turf that no foot ever trod, its mutilated statue, and its mouldering frescoes. What a silence; how profound! What a prospect; how drear! Suddenly he turned, and advancing with a more rapid pace, he approached Sybil. Her head was averted, and leaning on her left arm, she seemed lost

in reverie. Egremont fell upon his knee, and gently taking her hand, he pressed it to his lips. She started, she looked round, agitated, alarmed, while he breathed forth in tremulous accents, 'Let me express to you my adoration!

'Ah! not now for the first time, but for ever; from the moment I first beheld you in the starlit arch of Marney, has your spirit ruled my being, and softened every spring of my affections. I followed you to your home, and lived for a time content in the silent worship of your nature. When I came the last morning to the cottage, it was to tell, and to ask, all. Since then for a moment your image has never been absent from my consciousness; your picture consecrates my hearth, and your approval has been the spur of my career. Do not reject my love; it is deep as your nature, and fervent as my own. Banish those prejudices that have embittered your existence, and, if persisted in, may wither mine. Deign to retain this hand! If I be a noble, I have none of the accidents of nobility: I cannot offer you wealth, splendour, or power; but I can offer you the devotion of an entranced being, aspirations that you shall guide, an ambition that you shall govern.'

'These words are mystical and wild,' said Sybil with an amazed air; 'they come upon me with convulsive suddenness.' And she paused for an instant, collecting, as it were, her mind with an expression almost of pain upon her countenance. 'These changes of life are so strange and rapid that it seems to me I can scarcely meet them. You are Lord Marney's brother; it was but yesterday, only yesterday, I learnt it. I thought then I had lost your friendship, and now you speak of—love! love of me! Retain your

FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY FRANCIS VAUX WILSON

Egremont fell upon his knees, and gently taking her hand he pressed it to his lips.

(See page 402.)

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hand and share your life and fortunes! You forget what I am. But though I learnt only yesterday what you are, I will not be so remiss. Once you wrote upon a page you were my faithful friend; and I have pondered over that line with kindness often. I will be your faithful friend; I will recall you to yourself. I will at least not bring you shame and degradation.'

'Oh, Sybil, beloved, beautiful Sybil, not such bitter words; no, no!'

'No bitterness to you! that would indeed be harsh,' and she covered with her hand her streaming eyes.

'Why, what is this?' after a pause and with an effort she exclaimed. 'A union between the child and brother of nobles and a daughter of the people! Estrangement from your family, and with cause; their hopes destroyed, their pride outraged; alienation from your order, and justly, all their prejudices insulted. You will forfeit every source of worldly content and cast off every spring of social success. Society for you will become a great confederation to deprive you of self-complacency. And rightly. Will you not be a traitor to the cause? No, no, kind friend, for such I'll call you. Your opinion of me, too good and great as I feel it, touches me deeply. I am not used to such passages in life; I have read of such. Pardon me, feel for me, if I receive them with some disorder. They sound to me for the first time, and for the last. Perhaps they ought never to have reached my ear. No matter now; I have a life of penitence before me, and I trust I shall be pardoned.' And she wept.

'You have indeed punished me for the fatal accident of birth, if it deprives me of you.'

'Not so,' she added, weeping; 'I shall never be the bride of earth; and but for one, whose claims though earthly are to me irresistible, I should have ere this forgotten my hereditary sorrows in the cloister.'

All this time Egremont had retained her hand, which she had not attempted to withdraw. He had bent his head over it as she spoke; it was touched with his tears. For some moments there was silence; then, looking up and in a smothered voice, Egremont made one more effort to induce Sybil to consider his suit. He combated her views as to the importance to him of the sympathies of his family and of society; he detailed to her his hopes and plans for their future welfare; he dwelt with passionate eloquence on his abounding love. But, with a solemn sweetness, and as it were a tender inflexibility, the tears trickling down her soft cheek, and pressing his hand in both of hers, she subdued and put aside all his efforts.

'Believe me,' she said, 'the gulf is impassable.'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Riots at Birmingham.

'TERRIBLE news from Birmingham,' said Mr. Egerton at Brooks's. 'They have massacred the police, beat off the military, and sacked the town. News just arrived.'

'I have known it these two hours,' said a grey-headed gentleman, speaking without taking his eyes off the newspaper. 'There is a cabinet sitting now.'

'Well, I always said so,' said Mr. Egerton; 'our fellows ought to have put down that Convention.'

'It is deuced lucky,' said Mr. Berners, 'that the Bedchamber business is over, and we are all right. This affair, in the midst of the Jamaica hitch, would have been fatal to us.'

'These Chartists evidently act upon a system,' said Mr. Egerton. 'You see they were perfectly quiet till the National Petition was presented and debated; and now, almost simultaneously with our refusing to consider their petition, we have news of this outbreak.'

'I hope they will not spread,' said the grey-headed gentleman. 'There are not troops enough in the country if there be anything like a general movement.

I hear they have sent the Guards down by a special train, and a hundred more of the police. London is not over-garrisoned.'

'They are always ready for a riot at Birmingham,' said a Warwickshire peer. 'Trade is very bad there and they suffer a good deal. But I should think it would not go farther.'

'I am told,' said the grey-headed gentleman, 'that business is getting slack in all the districts.'

'It might be better,' said Mr. Egerton, 'but they have got work.'

Here several gentlemen entered, inquiring whether the evening papers were in, and what was the news from Birmingham.

'I am told,' said one of them, 'that the police were regularly smashed.'

'Is it true that the military were really beat off?'

'Quite untrue: the fact is, there were no proper preparations; the town was taken by surprise, the magistrates lost their heads; the people were masters of the place; and when the police did act, they were met by a triumphant populace, who two hours before would have fled before them. They say they have burnt down forty houses.'

'It is a bad thing, this beating the police,' said the grey-headed gentleman.

'But what is the present state of affairs?' inquired Mr. Berners. 'Are the rioters put down?'

'Not in the least,' said Mr. Egerton, 'as I hear. They are encamped in the Bull Ring amid smoking ruins, and breathe nothing but havoc.'

'Well, I voted for taking the National Petition into consideration,' said Mr. Berners. 'It could do us no harm, and would have kept things quiet.'

'So did every fellow on our side,' said Mr. Egerton, 'who was not in office or about to be. Well, Heaven knows what may come next. The Charter may some day be as popular in this club as the Reform Act.'

'The oddest thing in that debate,' said Mr. Berners, 'was Egremont's move.'

'I saw Marney last night at Lady St. Julians',' said Mr. Egerton, 'and congratulated him on his brother's speech. He looked daggers, and grinned like a ghoul.'

'It was a very remarkable speech, that of Egermont,' said the grey-headed gentleman. 'I wonder what he wants.'

'I think he must be going to turn Radical,' said the Warwickshire peer.

'Why, the whole speech was against Radicalism,' said Mr. Egerton.

'Ah, then he is going to turn Whig, I suppose.'

'He is ultra anti-Whig,' said Egerton.

'Then what the deuce is he?' said Mr. Berners.

'Not a Conservative certainly, for Lady St. Julians does nothing but abuse him.'

'I suppose he is crotchety,' suggested the Warwickshire noble.

'That speech of Egremont was the most really democratic speech that I ever read,' said the grey-headed gentleman. 'How was it listened to?'

'Oh! capitally,' said Mr. Egerton. 'He has seldom spoken before, and always slightly though well. He was listened to with mute attention; never was a better house. I should say made a great impression, though no one knew exactly what he was after.'

'What does he mean by obtaining the results of the Charter without the intervention of its machinery?' inquired Lord Loraine, a mild, middle-aged, lounging,

languid man, who passed his life in crossing from Brooks's to Boodle's, and from Boodle's to Brooks's, and testing the comparative intelligence of these two celebrated bodies; himself gifted with no ordinary abilities cultivated with no ordinary care, but the victim of sauntering, his sultana queen, as it was, according to Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, of the Second Charles Stuart.

'He spoke throughout in an exoteric vein,' said the grey-headed gentleman, 'and I apprehend was not very sure of his audience; but I took him to mean, indeed it was the gist of the speech, that if you wished for a time to retain your political power, you could only effect your purpose by securing for the people greater social felicity.'

'Well, that is sheer Radicalism,' said the Warwickshire peer; 'pretending that the people can be better off than they are, is Radicalism and nothing else.'

'I fear, if that be Radicalism,' said Lord Loraine, 'we must all take a leaf out of the same book. Sloane was saying at Boodle's just now that he looked forward to the winter in his country with horror.'

'And they have no manufactures there,' said Mr. Egerton.

'Sloane was always a croaker,' said the Warwickshire peer. 'He always said the New Poor Law would not act, and there is no part of the country where it works so well as in his own.'

'They say at Boodle's there is to be an increase to the army,' said Lord Loraine; 'ten thousand men immediately; decided on by the cabinet this afternoon.'

'It could hardly have leaked out by this time,' said the grey-headed gentleman. 'The cabinet were sitting less than an hour ago.'

'They have been up a good hour,' said Lord Loraine, 'quite long enough for their decisions to be known in St. James' Street. In the good old times, George Farnley used always to walk from Downing Street to this place the moment the council was up and tell us everything.'

'Ah! those were the good old gentleman-like times,' said Mr. Berners, 'when members of Parliament had nobody to please and ministers of State nothing to do.'

The riots of Birmingham occurred two months after the events that closed our last chapter. That period, so far as the obvious movements of the Chartists were concerned, had been passed in preparations for the presentation and discussion of the National Petition, which the parliamentary embroilments of the spring of that year had hitherto procrastinated and prevented. The petition was ultimately carried down to Westminster on a triumphal car, accompanied by all the delegates of the Convention in solemn procession. It was necessary to construct a machine in order to introduce the huge bulk of parchment, signed by a million and a half of persons, into the House of Commons; and thus supported, its vast form remained on the floor of the House during the discussion. The House, after a debate which was not deemed by the people commensurate with the importance of the occasion, decided on rejecting the prayer of the Petition, and from that moment the party in the Convention who advocated a recourse to physical force in order to obtain their purpose, was in the ascendant.

The National Petition, and the belief that, though its objects would not at present be obtained, yet a solemn and prolonged debate on its prayer would at least hold out to the working-classes the hope that their

rights might from that date rank among the acknowledged subjects of parliamentary discussion, and ultimately, by the force of discussion, be recognised, as other rights of other portions of the people once equally disputed, had been the means by which the party in the Convention who upheld on all occasions the supremacy of moral power had been able to curb the energetic and reckless minority, who derided from the first all other methods but terror and violence as effective of their end. The hopes of all, the vanity of many, were frustrated and shocked by finding that the exertions and expenditure of long months were not only fruitless, but had not even attracted as numerous an assembly, or excited as much interest, as an ordinary party struggle on some petty point of factitious interest, forgotten as soon as fought.

The attention of the working-classes was called by their leaders to the contrast between the interest occasioned by the endangered constitution of Jamaica, a petty and exhausted colony, and the claims for the same constitutional rights by the working millions of England. In the first instance, not a member was absent from his place; men were brought indeed from distant capitals to participate in the struggle and to decide it; the debate lasted for days, almost for weeks; not a public man of light and leading in the country withheld the expression of his opinion; the fate of governments was involved in it; cabinets were overthrown and reconstructed in the throes and tumult of the strife, and, for the first time for a long period, the Sovereign personally interposed in public transactions with a significance of character which made the working-classes almost believe that the privileged had at last found a master, and the unfranchised re-

gained their natural chief. The mean position which the Saxon multitude occupied, as distinguished from the Jamaica planters, sunk deep into their hearts.

From that time all hope of relief from the demonstration of a high moral conduct in the millions, and the exhibition of that well-regulated order of public life which would intimate their fitness for the possession and fulfilment of public rights, vanished. The party of violence, a small minority, as is usually the case, but consisting of men of determined character, triumphed; and the outbreak at Birmingham was the first consequence of those reckless counsels that were destined in the course of the ensuing years to inflict on the working-classes of this country so much suffering and disaster.

It was about this time, a balmy morning of July, that Sybil, tempted by the soft sunshine, and a longing for the sight of flowers and turf and the spread of winding waters, went forth from her gloomy domicile to those beautiful gardens that bloom in that once melancholy region of marsh, celebrated in old days only for its Dutch canal and its Chinese bridge, and now not unworthy of the royal park that encloses them. Except here and there a pretty nursery-maid with her interesting charge — some beautiful child with nodding plume, immense bow, and gorgeous sash — the gardens were vacant. Indeed it was only at this early hour that Sybil found from experience that it was agreeable in London for a woman unaccompanied to venture abroad. There is no European city where our fair sisters are so little independent as in our metropolis — to our shame.

Something of the renovating influence of a beautiful nature was needed by the daughter of Gerard. She

was at this moment anxious and dispirited. The outbreak at Birmingham, the conviction that such proceedings must ultimately prove fatal to the cause to which she was devoted, the dark apprehension that her father was in some manner implicated in this movement, which had commenced with so much public disaster, and which menaced consequences still more awful; all these events, and fears, and sad forebodings, acted with immense influence on a temperament which, though gifted with even a sublime courage, was singularly sensitive. The quick and teeming imagination of Sybil conjured up a thousand fears which were in some degree unfounded, in a great degree exaggerated; but this is the inevitable lot of the creative mind practising on the inexperienced.

The shock too had been sudden. The two months that had elapsed since she had parted, as she supposed for ever, from Egremont, while they had not less abounded than the preceding time in that pleasing public excitement which her father's career, in her estimation alike useful, honourable, and distinguished, occasioned her, had been fruitful in some sources of satisfaction of a softer and more domestic character. The acquaintance of Hatton, of whom they saw a great deal, had very much contributed to the increased amenity of her life. He was a most agreeable, instructive, and obliging companion; who seemed peculiarly to possess the art of making life pleasant by the adroit management of unobtrusive resources. He lent Sybil books; and all that he recommended to her notice were of a kind that harmonised with her sentiment and taste. He furnished her from his library with splendid works of art, illustrative of these periods of our history, and those choice and costly edifices

which were associated with her fondest thought and fancy. He placed in her room the best periodical literature of the day, which for her was a new world; he furnished her with newspapers whose columns of discussion taught her that the opinions she had embraced were not unquestioned; as she had never seen a journal in her life before, except a stray number of the 'Mowbray Phalanx,' or the metropolitan publication which was devoted to the cause of the National Convention, and reported her father's speeches, the effect of this reading on her intelligence was, to say the least, suggestive.

Many a morning, too, when Gerard was disengaged, Hatton would propose that they should show Sybil something of the splendour or the rarities of the metropolis; its public buildings, museums, and galleries of art. Sybil, though uninstructed in painting, had that native taste which requires only observation to arrive at true results. She was much interested with all she saw and all that occurred, and her gratification was heightened by the society of an individual who not only sympathised with all she felt, but who, if she made an inquiry, was ever ready with an instructive reply. Hatton poured forth the taste and treasures of a well-stored and refined intelligence. And then, too, always easy, bland, and considerate; and though with luxuries and conveniences at his command, to participate in which, under any other circumstances, might have been embarrassing to his companions, with so much tact, that either by an allusion to early days, happy days when he owed so much to Gerard's father, or some other mode equally felicitous, he contrived completely to maintain among them the spirit of equality.

In the evening, Hatton generally looked in when

Gerard was at home, and on Sundays they were always together. Their common faith was a bond of union which led them to the same altar, and on that day Hatton had obtained their promise always to dine with him. He was careful to ascertain each holy day at what chapel the music was most exquisite, that the most passionate taste of Sybil might be gratified. Indeed, during this residence in London, the opportunity it afforded of making her acquainted with some of the great masters of the human voice was perhaps to Sybil a source of pleasure not the least important. For, though it was not deemed consistent with the future discipline which she contemplated to enter a theatre, there were yet occasions which permitted her, under every advantage, to listen to the performance of the masterpieces of sacred melody. Alone, with Hatton and her father, she often poured forth those tones of celestial sweetness and ethereal power that had melted the soul of Egremont amid the ruins of Marney Abbey.

More intimately acquainted with Sybil Gerard, Hatton had shrunk from the project that he had at first so crudely formed. There was something about her that awed, while it fascinated him. He did not relinquish his purpose, for it was a rule of his life never to do that; but he postponed the plans of its fulfilment. Hatton was not, what is commonly understood by the phrase, in love with Sybil: certainly not passionately in love with her. With all his daring and talents, and fine taste, there was in Hatton such a vein of thorough good sense, that it was impossible for him to act or even to think anything that was ridiculous. He wished still to marry Sybil for the great object that we have stated; he had a mind quite

equal to appreciate her admirable qualities, but sense enough to wish that she were a less dazzling creature, because then he would have a better chance of accomplishing his end. He perceived, when he had had a due opportunity to study her character, that the cloister was the natural catastrophe impending over a woman who, with an exalted mind, great abilities, a fine and profound education, and almost supernatural charms, found herself born and rooted in the ranks of a degraded population.

All this Hatton knew; it was a conclusion he had arrived at by a gradual process of induction, and by vigilant observation that in its study of character had rarely been deceived; and when, one evening, with an art that could not be suspected, he sounded Gerard on the future of his daughter, he found that the clear intellect and straightforward sagacity of the father had arrived at the same result. 'She wishes,' said Gerard, 'to take the veil, and I only oppose it for a time, that she may have some knowledge of life and a clear conception of what she is about to do. I wish not that she should hereafter reproach her father. But, to my mind, Sybil is right. She cannot look to marriage: no man that she could marry would be worthy of her.'

During these two months, and especially during the last, Morley was rarely in London, though ever much with Gerard, and often with his daughter, during his visits. The necessary impulse had been given to the affairs of the Convention, the delegates had visited the members, the preparations for the presentation of the National Petition had been completed; the overthrow of the Whig government, the abortive effort of Sir Robert Peel, the return of the

Whig administration, and the consequent measures had occasioned a delay of two months in the presentation of the great document: it was well for Gerard to remain, who was a leader in debate, and whose absence for a week would have endangered his position as the head of a party, but these considerations did not influence Morley, who had already found great inconvenience in managing his journal at a distance; so, about the middle of May, he had returned to Mowbray, coming up occasionally by the train if anything important were stirring, or his vote could be of service to his friend and colleague. The affair of Birmingham, however, had alarmed Morley, and he had written up to Gerard that he should instantly repair to town. Indeed he was expected the very morning that Sybil, her father having gone to the Convention, where there were at this very moment fiery debates, went forth to take the morning air of summer in the gardens of St. James' Park.

It was a real summer day; large, round, glossy, fleecy clouds, as white and shining as glaciers, studded with their immense and immovable forms the deep blue sky. There was not even a summer breeze, though the air was mellow, balmy and exhilarating. There was a bloom upon the trees, the waters glittered, the prismatic wild-fowl dived, breathed again, and again disappeared. Beautiful children, fresh and sweet as the new-born rose, glanced about with the gestures and sometimes the voices of Paradise. And in the distance rose the sacred towers of the great Western Minster.

How fair is a garden amid the toils and passions of existence! A curse upon those who vulgarise and desecrate these holy haunts; breaking the hearts of

nursery-maids, and smoking tobacco in the palace of the rose!

The mental clouds dispelled as Sybil felt the freshness and fragrance of nature. The colour came to her cheek; the deep brightness returned to her eye: her step, that at first had been languid, and if not melancholy, at least contemplative, became active and animated. She forgot the cares of life, and was touched by all the sense of all its enjoyment. To move, to breathe, to feel the sunbeam, were sensible and surpassing pleasures. Cheerful by nature, notwithstanding her stately thoughts and solemn life, a brilliant smile played on her seraphic face, as she marked the wild passage of the daring birds, or watched the thoughtless grace of infancy.

She rested herself on a bench beneath a branching elm, and her eye, which for some time had followed the various objects that had attracted it, was now fixed in abstraction on the sunny waters. The visions of past life rose before her. It was one of those reveries when the incidents of our existence are mapped before us, when each is considered with relation to the rest, and assumes in our knowledge its distinct and absolute position; when, as it were, we take stock of our experience, and ascertain how rich sorrow and pleasure, feeling and thought, intercourse with our fellow-creatures and the fortuitous mysteries of life, have made us in wisdom.

The quick intelligence and the ardent imagination of Sybil had made her comprehend with fervour the two ideas that had been impressed on her young mind; the oppression of her Church and the degradation of her people. Educated in solitude and exchanging thoughts only with individuals of the same

sympathies, these impressions had resolved themselves into one profound and gloomy conviction that the world was divided only between the oppressors and the oppressed. With her, to be one of the people was to be miserable and innocent; one of the privileged, a luxurious tyrant. In the cloister, in her garden, amid the scenes of suffering which she often visited and always solaced, she had raised up two phantoms which with her represented human nature.

But the experience of the last few months had operated a great change in these impressions. She had seen enough to suspect that the world was a more complicated system than she had preconceived. There was not that strong and rude simplicity in its organisation which she had supposed. The characters were more various, the motives more mixed, the classes more blended, the elements of each more subtle and diversified, than she had imagined. The people, she found, was not that pure embodiment of unity of feeling, of interest, and of purpose, which she had pictured in her abstractions. The people had enemies among the people: their own passions; which made them often sympathise, often combine, with the privileged. Her father, with all his virtues, all his abilities, singleness of purpose, and simplicity of aim, encountered rivals in their own Convention, and was beset by open, or, still worse, secret foes.

Sybil, whose mind had been nurtured with great thoughts, and with whom success or failure alike partook of the heroic, who had hoped for triumph, but who was prepared for sacrifice, found to her surprise that great thoughts have very little to do with the business of the world; that human affairs, even in an

age of revolution, are the subject of compromise; and that the essence of compromise is littleness. She thought that the people, calm and collected, conscious at last of their strength and confident in their holy cause, had but to express their pure and noble convictions by the delegates of their choice, and that an antique and decrepit authority must bow before the irresistible influence of their moral power. These delegates of their choice turned out to be a plebeian senate of wild ambitions and sinister and selfish ends, while the decrepit authority that she had been taught existed only by the sufferance of the millions, was compact and organised, with every element of physical power at its command, and supported by the interests, the sympathies, the honest convictions, and the strong prejudices of classes influential not merely from their wealth but even by their numbers.

Nor could she resist the belief that the feeling of the rich towards the poor was not that sentiment of unmingled hate and scorn which she associated with Norman conquerors and feudal laws. She would ascribe rather the want of sympathy that unquestionably exists between wealth and work in England, to mutual ignorance between the classes which possess these two great elements of national prosperity; and though the source of that ignorance was to be sought in antecedent circumstances of violence and oppression, the consequences perhaps had outlived the causes, as customs survive opinions.

Sybil looked towards Westminster, to those proud and passionate halls where assembles the Parliament of England; that rapacious, violent, and haughty body, which had brought kings and prelates to the block; spoiled churches and then seized the sacred

manors for their personal prey; invested their own possessions with infinite privileges, and then mortgaged for their state and empire the labour of countless generations. Could the voice of solace sound from such a quarter?

Sybil unfolded a journal which she had brought; not now to be read for the first time; but now for the first time to be read alone, undisturbed, in a scene of softness and serenity. It contained a report of the debate in the House of Commons on the presentation of the National Petition; that important document which had been the means of drawing forth Sybil from her solitude, and of teaching her something of that world of which she had often pondered, and yet which she had so inaccurately preconceived.

Yes! there was one voice that had sounded in that proud Parliament, that, free from the slang of faction, had dared to express immortal truths: the voice of a noble, who without being a demagogue, had upheld the popular cause; had pronounced his conviction that the rights of labour were as sacred as those of property; that if a difference were to be established, the interests of the living wealth ought to be preferred; who had declared that the social happiness of the millions should be the first object of a statesman, and that, if this were not achieved, thrones and dominions, the pomp and power of courts and empires, were alike worthless.

With a heart not without emotion, with a kindling cheek, and eyes suffused with tears, Sybil read the speech of Egremont. She ceased; still holding the paper with one hand, she laid on it the other with tenderness, and looked up to breathe, as it were, for relief. Before her stood the orator himself.

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